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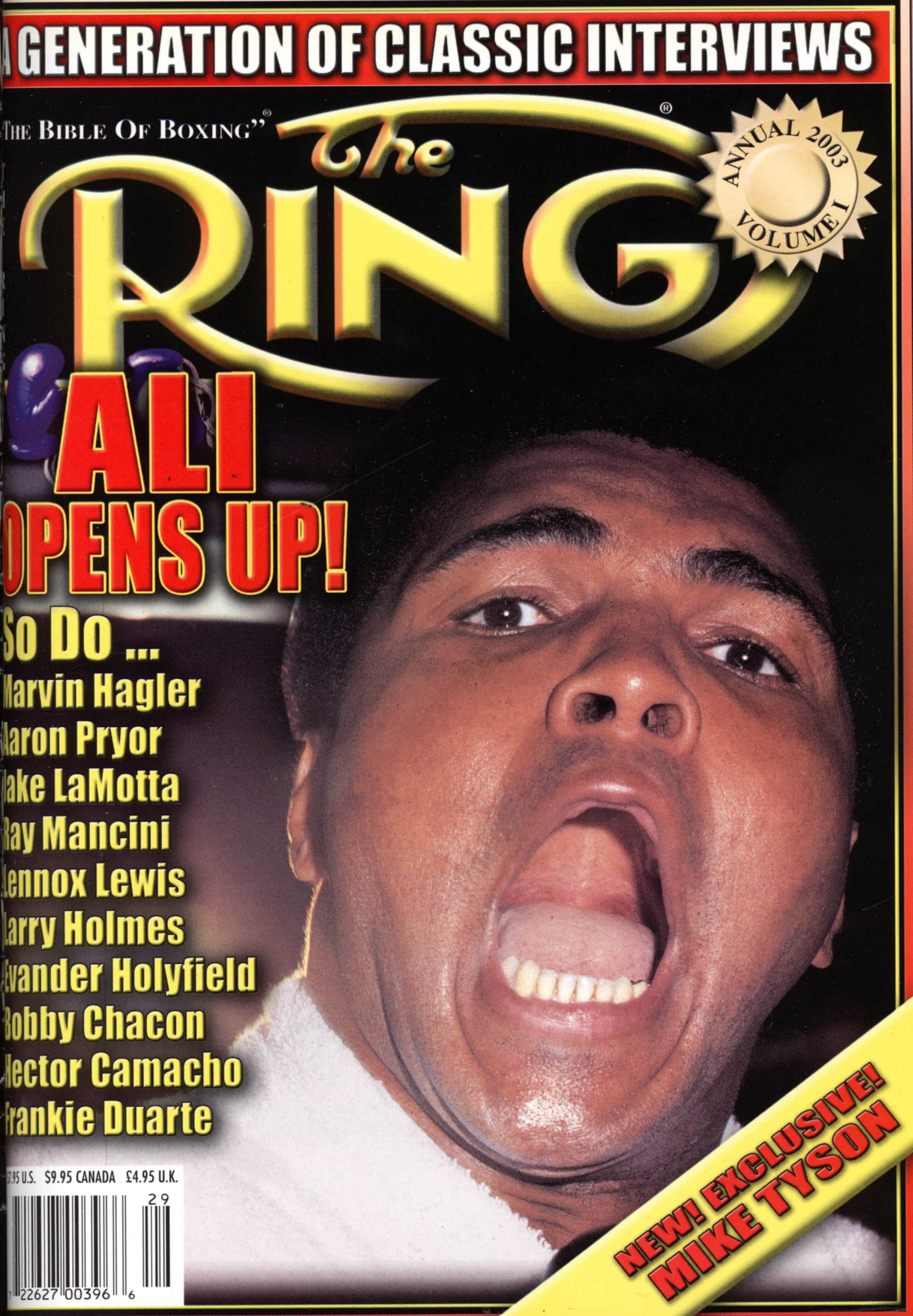

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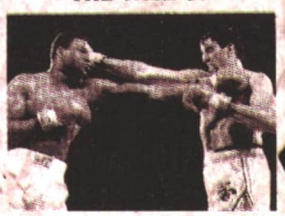

HOLMES - COONEY
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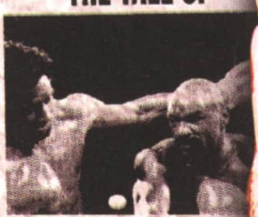

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MARCH 26

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HAGLER - LEONARD
APRIL 2

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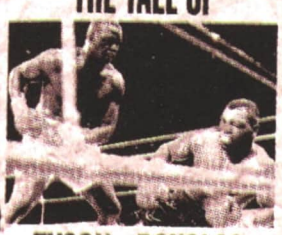
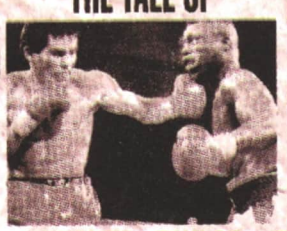


TYSON - DOUGLAS
APRIL 9

THE TALE OF

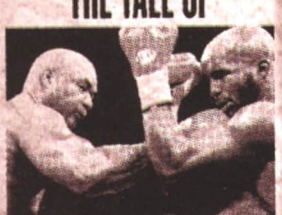


CHAVEZ - TAYLOR
APRIL 16

THE TALE OF

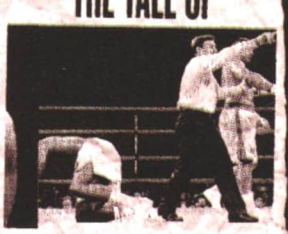
HOLYFIELD - BOWE
APRIL 23

THE TALE OF



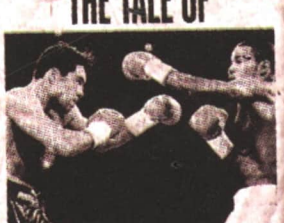
FOREMAN - MOORER
APRIL 30

THE TALE OF



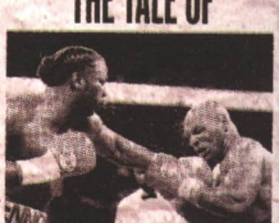
BOWE - GOLOTA
MAY 7

THE TALE OF



DE LA HOYA - TRINIDAD
MAY 14

THE TALE OF



LEWIS - TYSON
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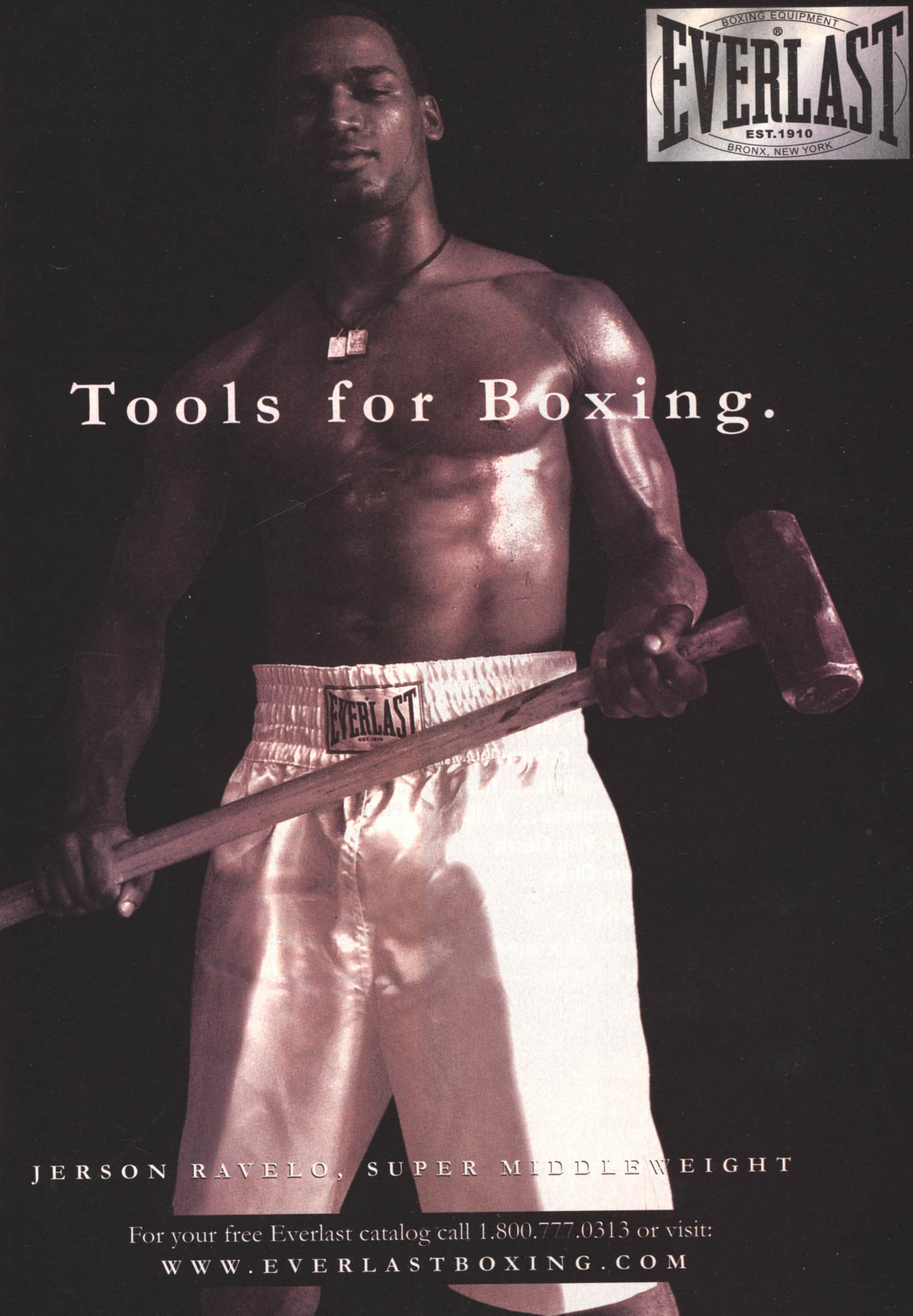
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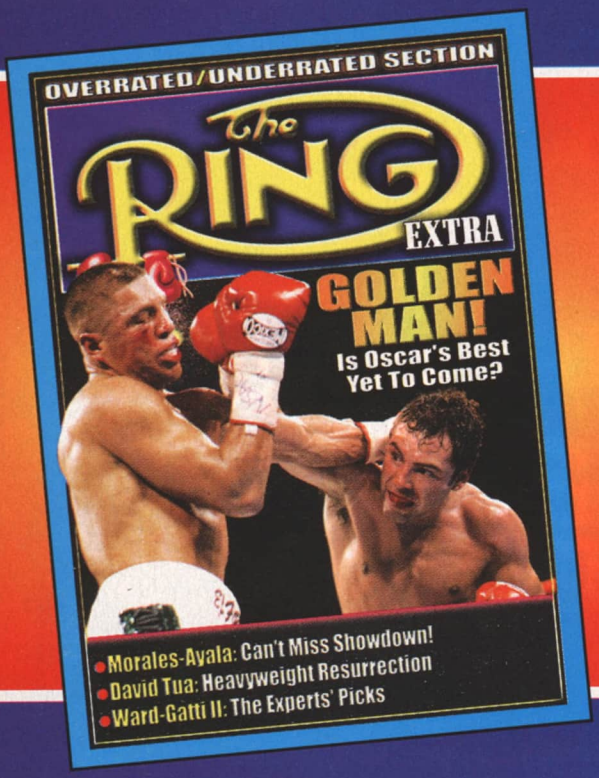

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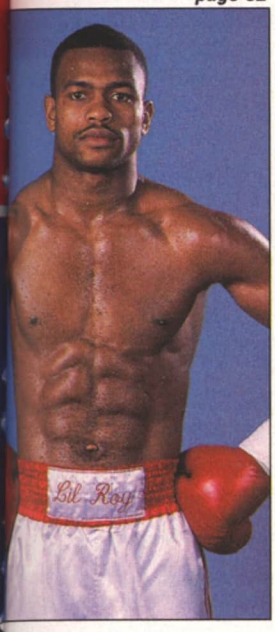
The RING ANNUAL

CONTENTS

Volume I, 2003

page 62



5 **RINGSIDE**
By Nigel Collins

8 **MIKE TYSON**
"I Just Don't Want To Go Crazy Anymore"

16 **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
"I'm Gonna Beat George Foreman … No Doubt"

26 **BOBBY CHACON**
"She Said It Would Make It Easier If She Got Out Of The Way"

36 **JAKE LaMOTTA**
"How I'm Alive Today, I'll Never Know"

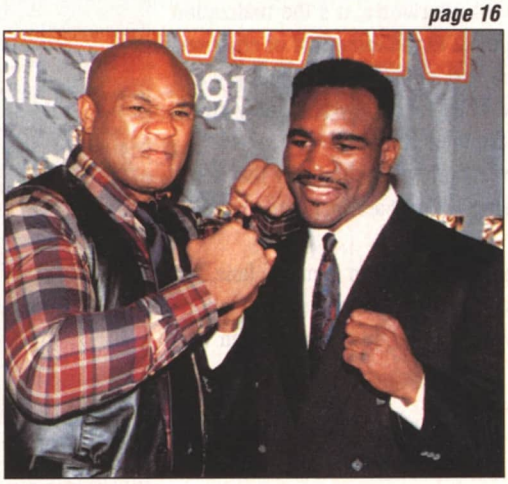
46 **HECTOR CAMACHO**
"Nobody Understands Me"

52 **FRANKIE DUARTE**
"Boxing Changed My Life Around"

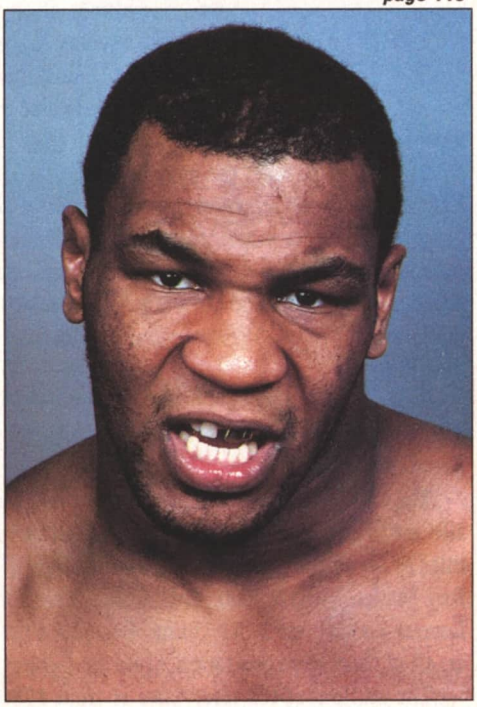
62 **ROY JONES**
"I Don't Intend To Avoid No One"

68 **RAY MANCINI**
"I Know I'm Gonna Be Champion"

page 16



page 116



76 **MUHAMMAD ALI**
"I Will Be Greater Than All The Athletes In The World"

82 **AARON PRYOR**
"There's Still A Lot Of Anger In Me"

90 **LENNOX LEWIS**
"Holyfield Is There For The Taking"

98 **LARRY HOLMES**
"There Ain't Anybody Gonna Beat Me For Another Two Years"

106 **MARVIN HAGLER**
"I'm Getting To Love Myself As The Man, Not The Boxer"

116 **MIKE TYSON**
"My Life Is Useless"

128 **COMPLETE INTERVIEW INDEX**

Cover Design: Joe Kalman

RINGSIDE

All boxers have a great story. They probably wouldn't be boxers otherwise. Thankfully, no group of professional athletes is as accessible as fighters, and none converse as candidly, frequently sharing their thoughts about the most personal and painful subjects. For that reason, it is typically the fighter's own words that speak most eloquently about what it's like to be a modern-day gladiator.

The things fighters say shock us, move us, and make us laugh—sometimes all at the same time. As a rule, it is what the fighters themselves say, rather than what others say about them, that gives us the most meaningful insights into both their triumphs and tragedies. It is also the fighter's words that often give us the most revealing peek into their lives away from the boxing ring.

In its long history, the pages of THE RING, and more recently its sister publication *KO*, have been the repository for the words of countless fighters, from every level of the game. Often, those words are recorded in a question-and-answer format, which is clearly the most direct way for fighters to communicate with their fans. Over the last couple of decades, our editors and writers have gathered hundreds of Q&A interviews, a veritable goldmine of verbal nuggets, many of them from the most famous fighters to ever pull on the gloves.

Rather than allowing these interviews to lay dormant, gathering dust in THE RING archives, we have decided to reprint some of the very best in this issue of THE RING ANNUAL.

The subjects range from Muhammad Ali, the most famous and loquacious fighter of all-time, to Frankie Duarte, a popular California bantamweight who never won a world title. Many of the fighters—Ali, Jake LaMotta, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Aaron Pryor, Ray Mancini—have been retired for years. Others—Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Lennox Lewis—are still fighting. Except for the LaMotta and Hagler interviews, however, all of them were conducted while the fighters in question were still active.

The earliest of the interviews is from 1980; the most recent was conducted just a week or so before we went to press and has never been published before. That is the Tyson interview that begins on page eight, which Iron Mike gave RING contributor Brian Doogan in mid-January as he trained for his fight with Cliff Etienne. It is fascinating to compare the Tyson of today with the Tyson who was interviewed in 1994 *(page 116)*, while incarcerated in the Indiana Youth Center, where he served three years for rape. But although Tyson's frame of mind has changed over the years, he remains a riveting interview subject.

If there is a common thread that runs through the 14 interviews, it's the realization that in many ways fighters are just like you and me, subject to the same sort of emotions as all the rest of us. They have hopes and dreams, fears and anxieties. They feel joy and sorrow, and experience great highs and crushing lows. They love, they hate, they struggle to pay the bills, and they want nothing but the best for their children.

But the thing that makes fighters different from everybody else, the thing that separates them from the pack, is that every part of their being is laid bare inside the ring, on display for all the world to see.

Editing and updating this issue was not only a wonderful trip down memory lane, but also a vivid reminder that what a fighter says is invariably manifested in his actions between the ropes. It is this that makes these interviews so special, just like the men who gave them.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 82, No. 6 **Annual**

The RING

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MIKE TYSON

"I Just Don't Want To Go Crazy Anymore"

MIKE TYSON WAS not in the best of moods in mid-January 2003. Although he was supposed to be training at the Golden Gloves Gym in Las Vegas for a February 22 bout against Clifford Etienne at the Pyramid Arena in Memphis, the 36-year-old former world heavyweight champion had failed to show up for two consecutive days. On the third day, he arrived, but there seemed to be still plenty on his mind. Introduced to RING *correspondent Brian Doogan by Freddie Roach, who is training him for the Etienne fight, Tyson was unnervingly inhospitable.*

A phone call to Sydney, Australia, to three-division former titleholder Jeff Fenech, one of Tyson's closest friends, led to the interview being arranged one day later. Tyson turned out to be as loquacious and engaging as he had been intimidating and unreceptive the day before. Discussion of his friendship with Fenech produced a remarkably revealing portrait of a man of whom we know so much about—and yet maybe so little.

"The first time I met Jeff Fenech, I was in my dressing room and I'm Mike Tyson, the most feared heavyweight champion of the world, and this little guy is going, 'Don't worry, heavyweight champ. It's going to be all right. It's going to be okay. You'll be all right. Don't worry.' Like he's my mother. 'It's going to be all right. You'll be okay.' And I'd never met him before. I don't know when it was, but it was just before I left the dressing room to fight somebody."

Throughout this recollection, Tyson had his right arm around Doogan and ran his hand back and forth across the back of his head, stroking his left shoulder with his left hand, speaking the words softly, "Don't worry," just as Fenech had spoken them to him in the final anxious moments before he had left the sanctuary of the dressing room to head for the solitude of the ring.

Back then Tyson was still the baddest man on the planet. Now he is looking for a rematch with world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, the man who destroyed him in eight rounds last June. This was where Doogan and Tyson began what developed into yet another engaging encounter with the most fascinating individual in sport today.

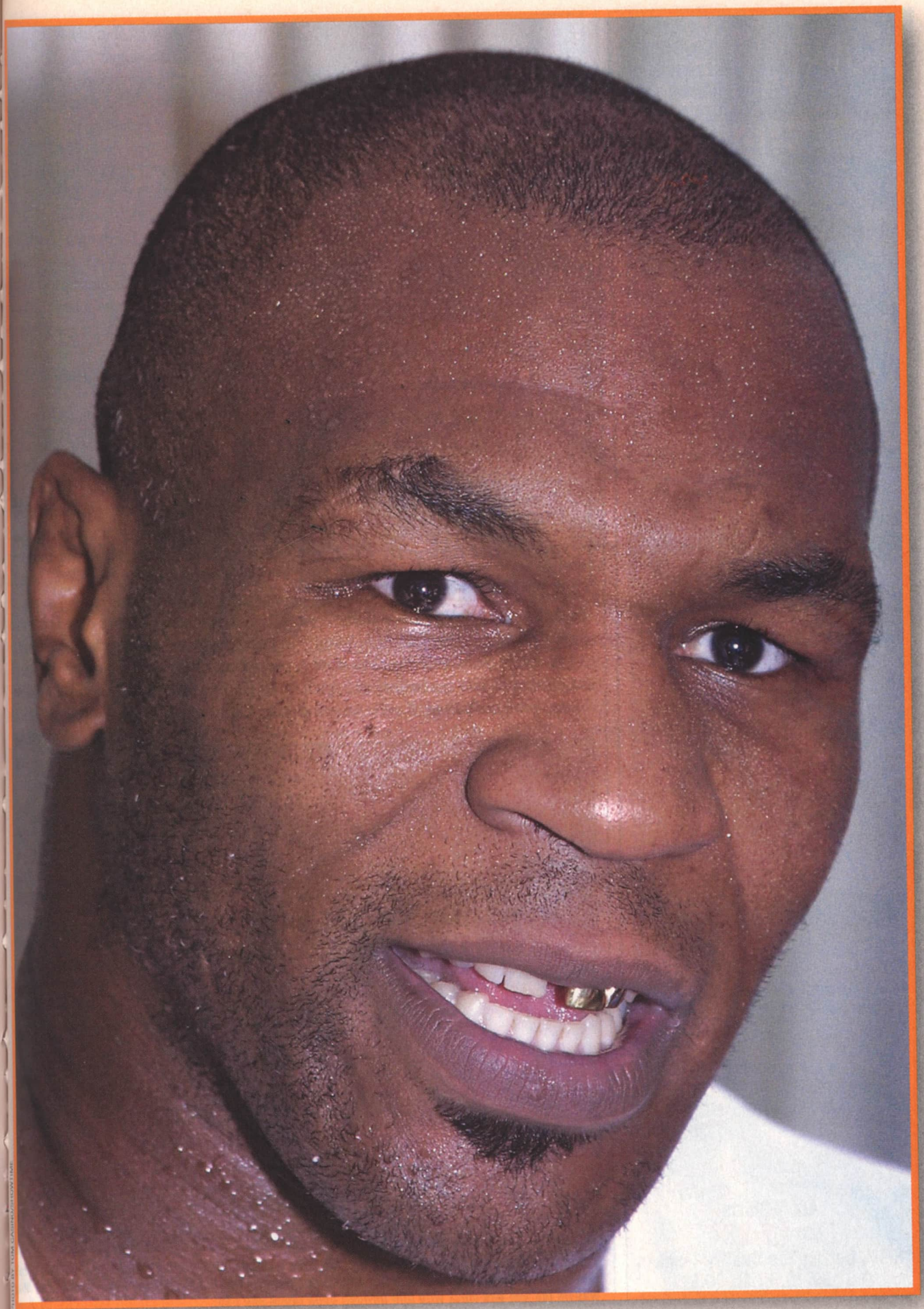
Q: Did you feel you might be finished after what happened last June in Memphis against Lennox Lewis?

A: I'm not finished fighting yet. No way. I wouldn't be fighting if I thought that. Against Lewis, I just lost. I'll be back. I'm looking forward to fighting him again. That's why I'm taking it serious now. I'm not making excuses, but everybody knows I didn't train for that fight. I came in fat and heavy. I didn't believe I'd have to do anything but hit him with one shot and knock him out, and I would really have Lennox Lewis all beat up. I paid for that.

I don't have any regrets about it, however. I know I'm going to get there again. Cus [D'Amato, Tyson mentor] always said I'm the kind of guy who's going to get hurt in the ring. I'm not going to go running. I'm a fool. I always get into stupid s___ and get hurt in the ring.

Q: Why is that?

A: I'm an extremist-type. I don't care about nothing in life, like prison cells and death and that stuff.



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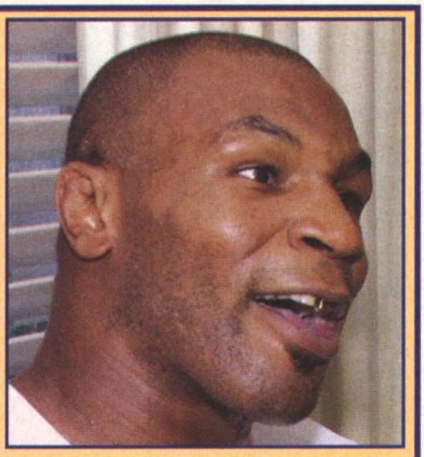


"If we're all going to heaven, then why should we be worried about death? We should all kill ourselves if it's such a pleasant place to be."

Q: Are you a fatalist? Do you dwell on death?

A: In my 36 years of living, I've done a lot of research into spiritualism and death. From what I understand, if we're all going to heaven, then why should we be worried about death? We should all kill ourselves if it's such a pleasant place to be. I could never hurt nobody who's done nothing to me, even if it's a person I hate.

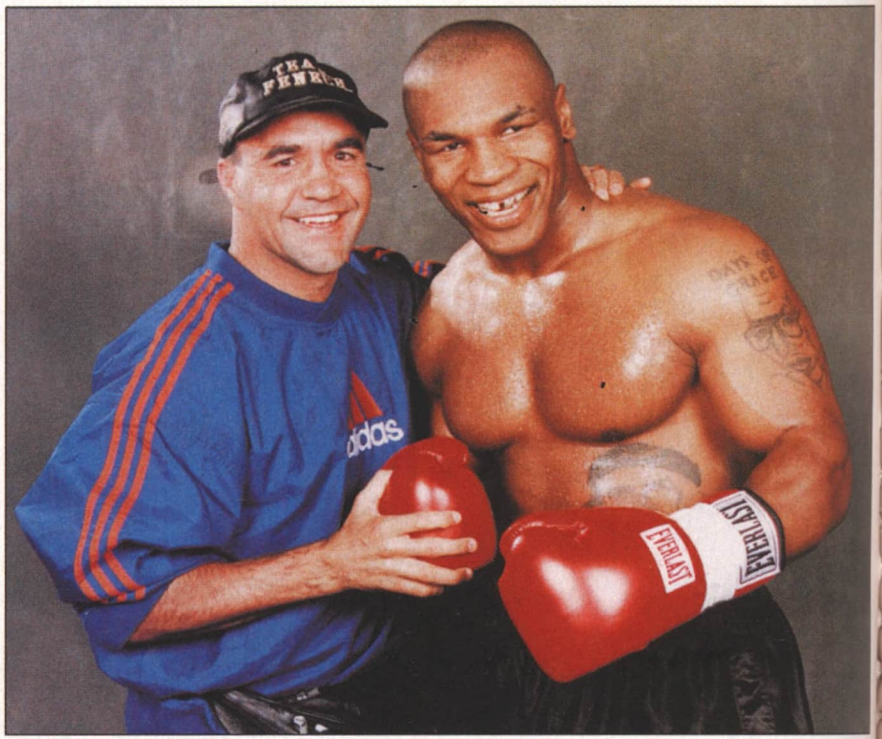
I think about great men. That's all I do. I look up books on great men. I don't care about their race. Do you know that the first slaves who came here were Irish and blacks? Not a lot of people know that. They arrived in New York and were met by people calling them bastards and bitches who emphasized their unwelcoming message by throwing a f___ing stone in their head.

Q: Have you seen the film *Gangs Of New York*?

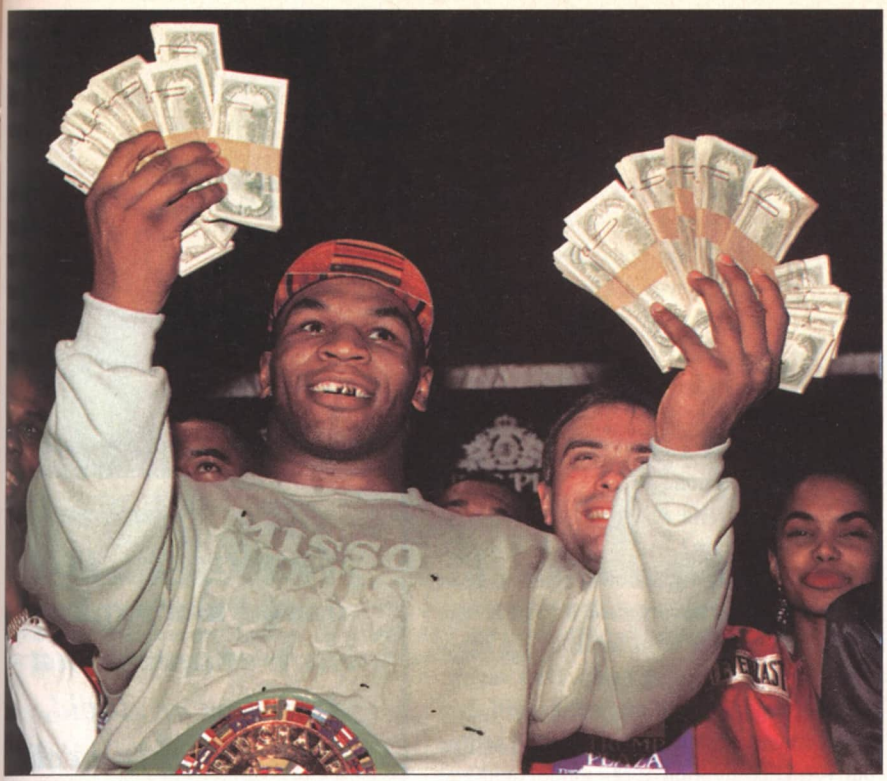
A: I read the book, by Herbert Asbury. The film is just one particular area of the book. The book takes the story up to 1927. I'm interested in all that. I'm a New Yorker. Always. But I live out on the West Coast, here or L.A. or Phoenix, about 95 percent of the time. There are too many distractions for me in New York and the police know me, everybody knows me. They know where I hang out. They know where my family lives. They know where to get me. There's no hiding place.

Q: Do you need to have a hiding place?

A: Yeah, because I'm a weird guy. I might



Tyson poses with his good buddy Jeff Fenech, who was accommodating in helping THE RING *obtain this interview. Three-division former titleholder Fenech befriended Tyson back when Iron Mike was on top and has stuck with him through good times and bad.*



Time has changed Tyson's attitude about money. Back in July 1989, following his first-round kayo of Carl "The Truth" Williams in Atlantic City, Iron Mike was happy to flash some cash for the media. Today, he claims that money is "nothing."

get angry one day and sometimes I don't want people to see that side. I get irritated. I'm human.

Q: What do you feel about the way your anger is sometimes unleashed?

A: Listen, I'm no martyr. I'm just a guy with feelings and I'm a street person.

Q: You're also a Muslim. Are you serious about your religion?

A: I've been a Muslim for 10 years. I haven't been keeping up all my prayers, but I pray twice a day and always over my food. I catch up with my readings every now and then.

Q: At what other times do you pray?

A: I pray at night time most of the time. But normally I pray when I'm basically in some s___. Some people say they don't believe in God. I went through that phase. But as soon as the s___ hits the fan, who are you going to turn to? The first words every person would say is, "Oh, God." But if there's a God, why does God want me to win $200-million this year and doesn't want to save a young girl with cancer? Maybe God wants me to take the $200-million and disperse it with some of these people. I don't know. I be f___ed up with this because Cus was a communist too.

Cus gave all his money away, and that's how I'm all the time in cliques. I don't like to do it. I really don't. But it's my upbringing. Cus said money's nothing. Friends are everything. I've been trying to make friends, but I don't think I really want any friends. I've just been following Cus telling me this bulls___ and I don't know. That's all he said. Friends are everything. Money's nothing.

Q: Is it friendship you are seeking when you give things away?

A: Yeah, I think so. I don't know. It's just the way I am. People get this misconception. They think I'm a punk, a bitch, or square, that I'm slow or stupid, and it comes from all these articles they read about me. They think I'm crazy. I am just a humble guy, but I'm not weak. I'm ferocious. But I'm a good guy.

Q: So when you say you want to kill Lennox Lewis, that's just fighting talk, not the real person.

A: Hell no. I kissed him. I kissed his mother. His mother was there after the fight, in the ring. His mother loves me and I love his mother.

Q: So that was more the real you than when you said all those things before the fight?

(Continued on page 12)

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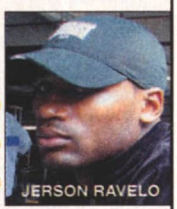

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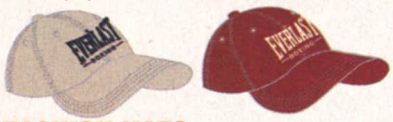

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Mike Tyson

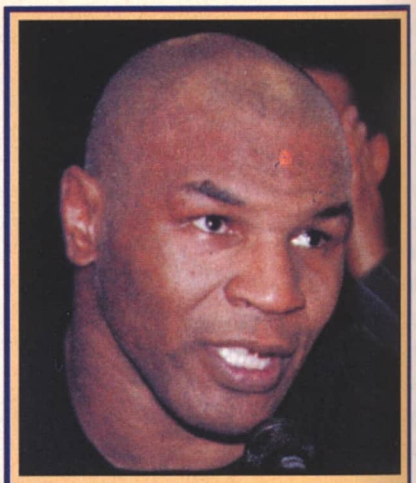
(Continued from page 11)

A: Yeah, listen, I knew Lennox when he came for a while to live in the Catskills when we were both kids. This is competition. It's just like the pigeons I keep. I've kept them since I was a kid in Brooklyn. They love each other, make babies, live together for years, but when you leave out some food, they will try to kill each other to get it, and once they're finished they're friends again. It's just like that. This is money. It's big money.

Q: Is money the reason you want to fight Lewis again?

A: No. I want to fight Lewis again to beat his ass. I might have kissed him after the fight, but I'll still want to crush his head when we're in the ring again. He's saying now he may not fight me, but he will. It's about money. Sometimes I want to retire, but you keep looking at the money and go, "F___!" I have no respect for money. But I'll keep on fighting regardless of what people say, regardless of them thinking it's about money. You know, I'm Mike Tyson. Most people wish they were in my situation. They're jealous. But that's their opinion and it's good. My problem is just to prove them wrong.

But you know what I think is at the root of everything? Greed. Everything is about money. Money is our God. We live, die,



"People get this misconception. They think I'm a punk, a bitch, or square, that I'm slow or stupid, and it comes from all these articles they read about me. They think I'm crazy. I am just a humble guy, but I'm not weak. I'm ferocious. But I'm a good guy."

Despite his uncompromising kayo loss to Lennox Lewis in June 2002 (pictured), Tyson still wants a rematch with the heavyweight champion. He claims he wasn't in shape for their first fight and that he still wants to "crush his head" inside the ring.

Former Tyson trainer Kevin Rooney poses with a painting of Cus D'Amato, who was such a big influence on both Tyson and Rooney. Tyson says he'd like to reconcile with both Rooney and Teddy Atlas, another D'Amato disciple who has fallen out with Tyson.

kill, cheat for it. All of us. And until we come to that reality, we're never going to come to a good standpoint, especially in this country. What we have in America is a sophisticated monarchy, and the trouble with a monarchy is that they have no idea about ordinary people's problems because they're not in the mix with them, not on the ground with them, not in the trenches. They're just not made out of that stuff. They can't go places I can go.

Q: Where might Mike Tyson be going? What would you do, Mike, if you were to retire?

A: I don't know, probably just tattoo my face and have a bunch of babies *(laughs)*. I ain't going to do s___. Nothing. I'll just sit down, have a lot of babies and talk s___, go to court, pay out thousands in support, and do nothing.

I have a lot of kids. But I have these discrepancies with their mothers. With Miguel, who was with me in my dressing room when I fought Lewis, I'm a very hands-on father. It seems like favoritism, but it's not. I just have easy access to him in Phoenix. I love him. He's my son and I want to raise him as my son. He's going to come to all of my fights because I want him to grow up to be a fighter. I just want him to know that by fighting you build character. You can learn to fight and win without fighting in the streets. You know when you fight you can get hurt and you know there's the possibility of losing, so you're very humbled, not afraid, humble. Every fighter knows the possibility is they will be beat.

Q: Are you now happy in your life?

A: I'm pretty content. I got no problems. I haven't really changed. I'm the same Mike. I ain't gonna take s___ from anybody. I just don't want to go crazy anymore. I want to live a respectable life and I want my kids to think I'm a respectable father. I want Miguel to be able to say, not that I was a man or a great man or anything like that because I'm just Mike. No, I want him to say, "My father took care of us, was kind to us and good to us." That's what I want him to say.

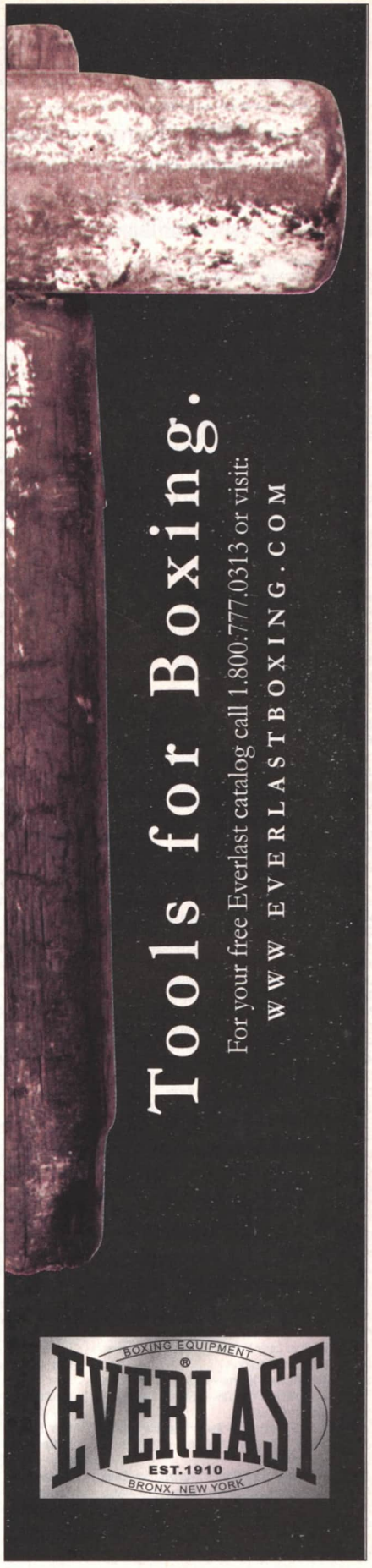
I go back to the Catskills still to visit Cus' grave. But I go back there in my mind a lot because that was the beginning. I think about things. I think about Teddy Atlas and Kevin Rooney and the guys who were there in the gym and in the house. We're all enemies now, but we were brothers.

Q: Would you like to be reconciled with Teddy Atlas, with Kevin Rooney?

A: Well, they got to want to do it too. I really do. I don't want to be fighting with those guys. A lot of those guys are the reason now that I'm here. I don't really want to fight with them. Let's just put everything in the past and see what we can do now. Make up for lost time.

Q: Is that what you're doing now, making up for lost time?

A: I'm just working hard and I'll be there soon, where I want to be.



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(ALL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH THE DECEMBER 2000 ISSUE)

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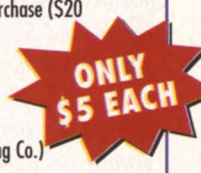

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EVANDER HOLYFIELD

"I'm Gonna Beat George Foreman ... No Doubt"

EVANDER HOLYFIELD HAS been called a nice guy so much that it's already lost some of its impact. Nice guy? What does that mean? Heck, he'd never give his opponent a free shot at his chin to make it a fair fight, would he? And so what if he shakes so many hands, kisses so many babies, and scribbles his name on so many pieces of paper that you'd think he was throwing his hat—and not his punches—in the ring? Even Mike Tyson and Sonny Liston could be politicians when they wanted to be.

No, you don't get a true insight into Holyfield's personality through the autographs he signs, but instead, through the ones he doesn't.

"Girls always want you to sign something like, 'To the hottest legs I ever seen,'" he once told us. "I won't do that because I don't want it to look like I'm trying to take someone's lady. Her husband or boyfriend might get mad and he knows he can't hit me, so he might hit her. I want to make sure none of these girls get hurt."

Now, that's a nice guy.

But is this gentle soul, a devout Christian who's automatically talking about the Bible when he says he does things by the book, capable of surviving on the throne as heavyweight champion? Can the "good book" really be compatible with the good hook? What happens when Holyfield squares off in April with fellow Bible-belter George Foreman? How does the Holy Man feel about aiming punches at a holy man?

In an attempt to better understand how the mild-mannered Holyfield achieves that delicate balance between his everyday reticence and the warrior's fury that is a mandatory requirement of his job, Jeff Ryan spoke with the heavyweight king in January.

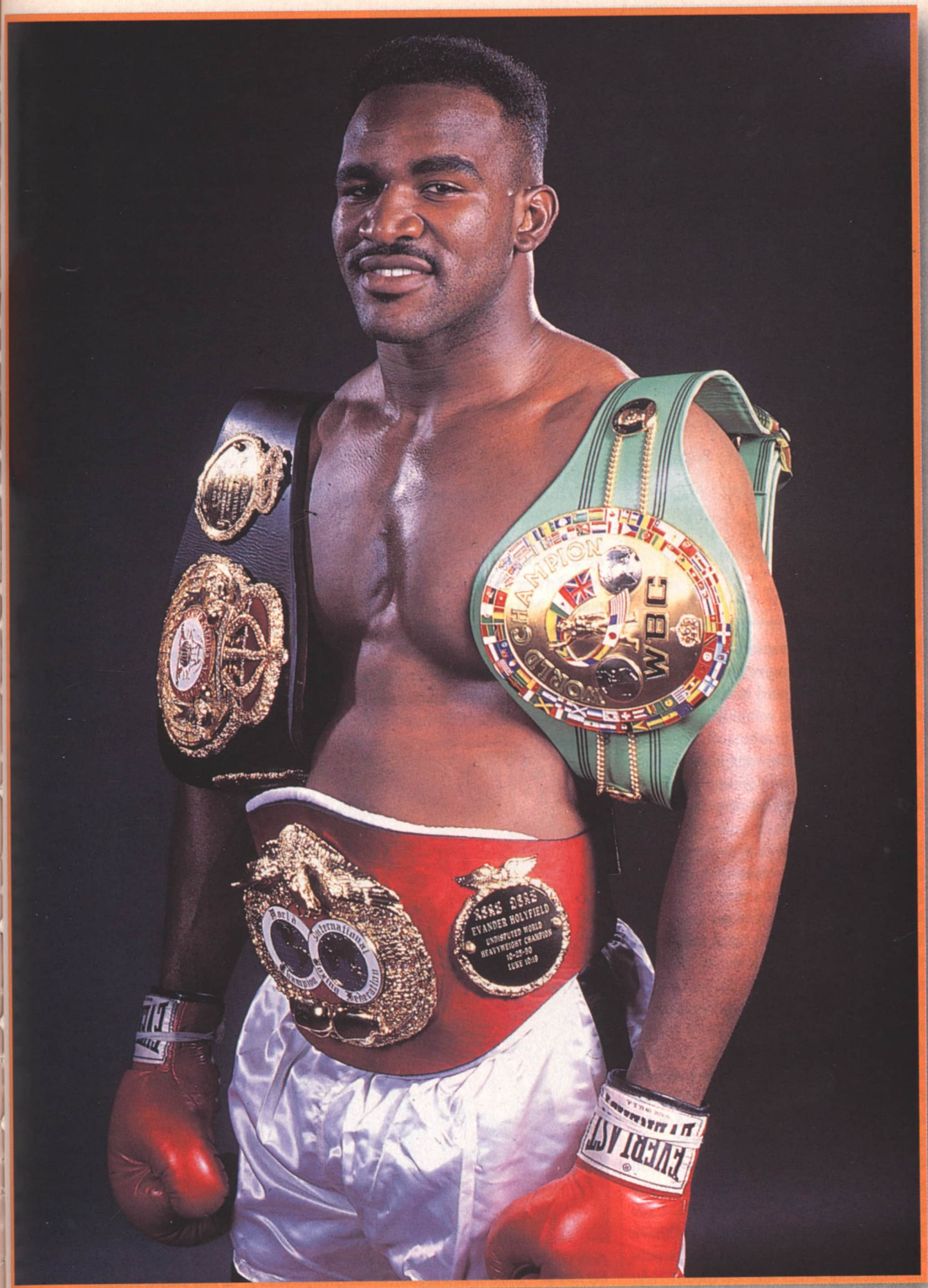
"The Real Deal," as always, was extremely cooperative. But he made no secret of the strain that being champion has proven to be. It's not hauling around those three heavy title belts that's been wearing him down. It's having to carry with him the burden of trying to please writers, fans, charity groups, and business associates, all of whom want a few minutes of his time here, or a few hours of his time there.

Holyfield spoke candidly about his upcoming showdown with Foreman, his reason for putting mandatory contender Mike Tyson in a holding pattern, and the possibility of being stripped of the WBC title. And he relived the finest moment of what has been a dazzling pro career: the devastating one-punch kayo of Buster Douglas last October. It was that right hand, one that trainers will be replaying for their young prospects for a decade to come, that proved beyond a doubt that nice guys don't always finish last.

Sometimes, though, nice guys can provide lasting finishes.

Interview conducted January 1991

Q: After you won the title, you were portrayed in a few articles as a man who, while happy to hold the title, seemed overwhelmed by the pressures and demands that came with being the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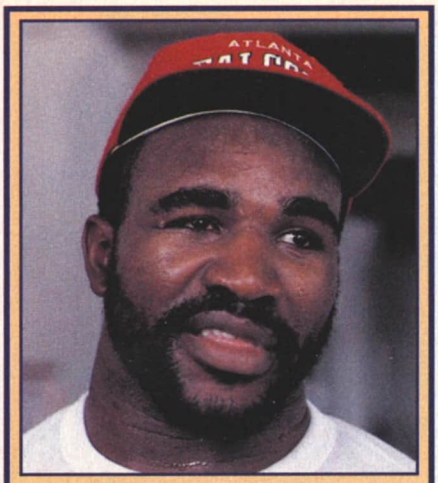


"People, in general, are fickle. When you know that, you don't feel bad. People want to see an upset. But the fans won't take away from my talent and ability to win."

heavyweight champion of the world. What caught you unprepared?

A: Well, I just imagined it would be different. I had figured it would be busy, but I didn't think I would be so busy that I wouldn't have time for stopping and taking a breath. A lot of people depend on you, and the responsibilities of being heavyweight champion take away time from things you used to do to *become* the champion. You don't have time to do aerobics, go to the gym when you're not in training, things like that. People want your time, they want you to do all these things, and they don't care too much about your training. Somehow I have to be focused and try to find time somewhere to do things I want to do.

Q: Just about everyone who has come in contact with you has described you as "a nice guy." Cooperating with the press and making a personal appearance for whoever requests one seems to be your nature. Is it tough for you to say, "I'm not going to do that, I have to draw the line"?

A: It is. That's the reason you need to have people around you that can talk to the people requesting things and tell them, "Hey, he's busy now and he's not going to be able to do it."

Q: What special responsibilities do you feel as the heavyweight champion?

A: The difference is handling yourself in public. I look at things different than I would if I wasn't the heavyweight champion. I realize that whether you want to be a role model or not, you are. You have to watch what you do. People always have an eye on your actions.

Q: Are you comfortable being a role model?

A: Yeah, 'cause I'm just being myself. I guess if I had to be something I wasn't comfortable being, then it would be difficult. But I'm still doing the same things I had been doing. I still go to a lot of sporting events, and I speak to kids just like I did before I was champion. That hasn't changed.

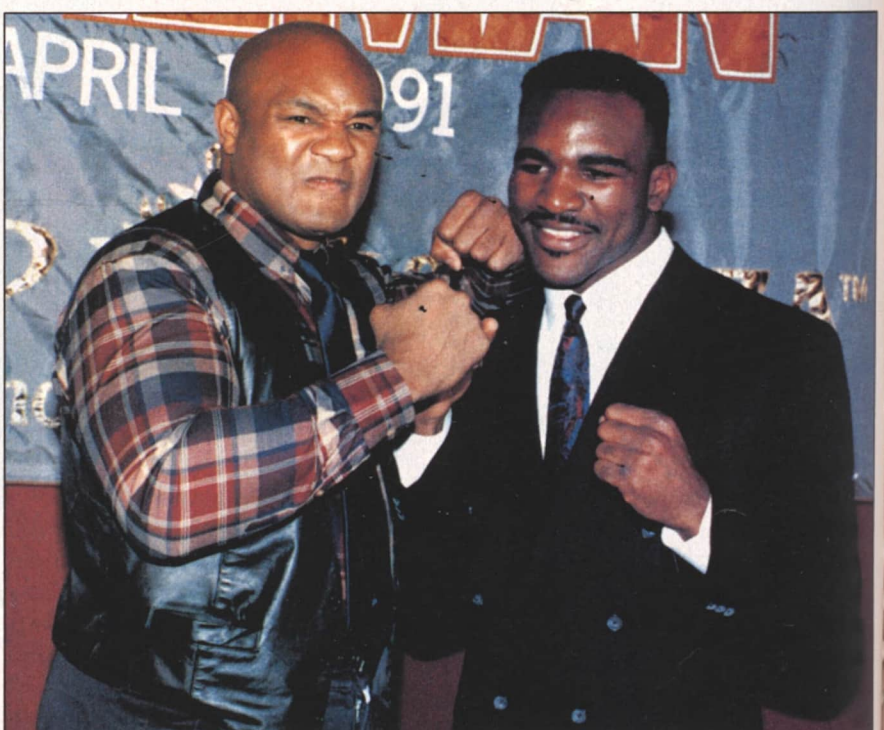
Q: Throughout the years, the heavyweight title has often had a thug image, particularly when a nasty Sonny Liston, or a brooding George Foreman, or a wild-driving Leon Spinks, or a trouble-making Mike Tyson held it. Is it important for you to change some of that image?

A: I didn't become heavyweight champion to start changing things or change the image of the title. I'm sure all the guys who were champion before me were just actually being themselves, and all I can do is be myself.

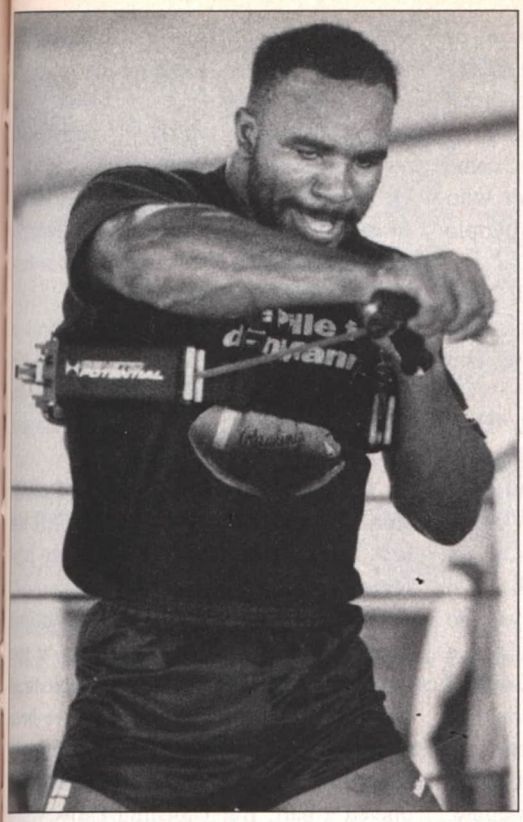
Q: Are you comfortable with the fact that your opinion on things, like the war in the Persian Gulf, or AIDS research, or homelessness, now matters to a large number of people? Or is that another burden for the heavyweight champ to carry?

A: It is kind of a burden. I have to watch what I say. I can't be open and say, "Hey, I don't like this, this, and this about the war, but I like that." I don't want anybody to be down on me because of the way I feel about a situation. And I don't want anybody to say, "Yeah, he's right," just because it's the champion speaking. If someone asked me what I thought about different issues, I would think twice before I answered. I would probably say, "I really don't want to touch that. I don't want to lead someone astray with my opinion."

Q: You've described a Foreman fight as a no-win situation in two respects. First, if you win, you beat an old man, and if you lose, it's the ultimate disaster. Second, when it comes to executing a strategy, you've said that if you box and move, you're perceived as being afraid; if you stand and slug, people call you crazy. With this being such a no-win sit-



Even though George Foreman had threatened to make a meal of Holyfield, the champion said that Big George—unlike a certain other ex-heavyweight champ—is very easy to stomach.



In Holyfield's view, modern training methods (left) are at least partially responsible for the today's champions being superior to those from earlier eras, such as 1950s heavyweight king Rocky Marciano (right).

uation, why were you so anxious to take the fight?

A: Main Events is my promoter, and before I fought Douglas, they proposed that my next fight would be with George Foreman or Mike Tyson. [Promoter] Dan Duva went over the contracts with me and let me know that both of them had a loss clause. Even if I lost to Douglas, I would get one of those other two fights. It came down to money. I paid the price against Buster because I was the challenger. I let Buster get $24-million and I got $8-million. I don't mind that as long as, when I'm champion, things go my way. But they wouldn't if I fought Tyson. When he was champion and we were supposed to fight, he was gonna get three times more than me. But this time, the contract called for me to get only a slight edge. That ain't fair. So I would rather go ahead and fight George Foreman now, give him the opportunity in his comeback, and then fight Tyson. By then, there will be a purse bid, and Tyson will have to agree to the rules and regulations of the WBA and WBC and IBF. He'll only get a third and I'll get two-thirds.

Q: You and Foreman are both religious men, and the rivalry between you is very low key, very lighthearted. Whether or not people believe that George belongs in the ring, they seem to like him. Do you get a kick out of the things he's been saying and doing, like threatening to put you between two pieces of bread and eat you?

A: I like him. I liked Henry Tillman, too, he was my best friend. But when they're in the ring, it's different. George joking around and stuff is okay with me. I feel that everybody has got a way of conducting himself before a fight. He's got a vocal way. My way is to not say anything. People may say, "Holyfield isn't talking up the fight," but just by mentioning that, *they're* talking up the fight. The promotion is there in the fact that this is a good fight. When you come down to it, we're both gonna get in the ring and fight, and people are gonna watch.

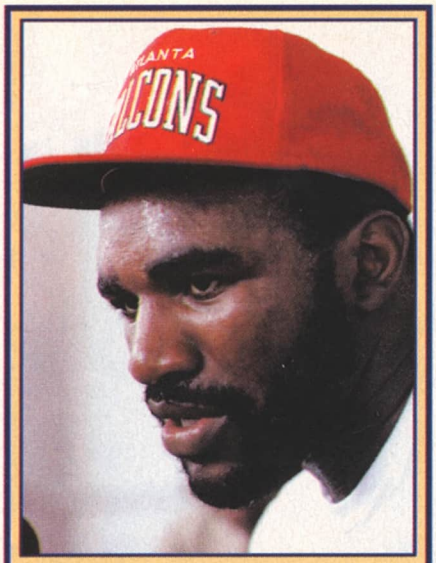
Q: How do you feel about the fact that although you've never done anything to turn off the fans, on fight night most of the general public is going to be rooting for Foreman?

A: That's no problem. People, in general, are fickle. When you know that, you don't feel bad. Hey, people pull for underdogs. They always want to see an upset. But the fans won't take away from my talent and my ability to win. It won't have anything to do with my confidence. If everybody went against me, it still wouldn't make a difference. It wouldn't shake nothing. I'm gonna beat George Foreman. There's *no* doubt.

Q: Being as deeply religious as you are, does it seem a little bizarre to have to go in the ring and try to beat up a man of God?

A: I don't look at it like that. I look at it strictly as competition. We're not fighting like two guys who are angry. We're *boxing*. He has something to prove and I have something to prove. We want to see who's the better man *in the ring*, not outside the ring. That's the reason we're coming together on April 19.

Q: The WBC has repeatedly threatened to take from you its version of the title. Mike Tyson, like you, was once bigger than the organizations. People would have known he was the champion, regardless of what the alphabets said. Still, he cherished his three belts and did everything he could to appease the ruling bodies. Are you comfortable having the public know that you're the real champ, or is it important for you to physically possess those three belts?



"I had figured it would be busy, but I didn't think I would be so busy that I wouldn't have time for stopping and taking a breath."

A: Well, I look at it like this: It's definitely in the people's mind who the champion is. But as far as my pocket is concerned, it's important to have the three belts. That's where the bucks are. Cable networks and TV networks buy fights because the governing bodies say that they're championship fights. I wouldn't like to lose my belts in the ring or by having the governing bodies take them away. I hope it doesn't ever come to that situation.

Q: You recently held a press conference calling for a federal investigation into boxing and federal control of the game. Why do you think that's needed?

A: Because nobody ever pays attention to how boxers are being misused. That's what I'm mainly concerned about when I say we gotta clean up this sport. We need to find out why boxers are being taken advantage of on the business side of things. Boxers are the ones doing the work, and they should get most of the money.

If a boxer goes out in the street and beats someone up, that means the boxer is taking advantage of his professional skills against someone who is no match for him. The boxer would get put in jail or get sued if he did that, right? I feel it should be the same way with a manager or lawyer or promoter who takes advantage of a fighter by getting him to sign a long-term contract that he doesn't understand. Lawyers go to school all these years and then they come out and they can trip up a boxer who doesn't know any better. *Those* people should be put in jail.

If the WBA and WBC and IBF don't have rules to protect the fighters, then maybe Congress can make the rules and force everybody to abide by them.

Q: Some readers might be saying, "Hey, Holyfield was able to get a title and become a multimillionaire. What does he have to complain about?" What is your answer to them?

A: Well, I want to assure them that I'm only looking out for the other guys who can't look out for themselves. I could be a cold-minded person and say, "Look, I made it. Get your own." But that would be what people who criticize me expect me to do. Some people would love it if I didn't care about other boxers and their welfare. But I do care about their welfare. If the government cleans the game up, it's not gonna benefit me more, it's gonna benefit the people on the way up.

Q: Do you think Douglas could have gotten up after you knocked him down?

A: I don't know. I hit him with a good shot and at that point in time, I was hoping that he wouldn't get up. I'm glad that he didn't get up, but it's not right for anyone to say that he could have. I kind of feel that if he could have, he would have.

Q: How would you compare that punch to the punches you've thrown throughout your career? Was it one of your better ones, just an average shot?

A: I think it was better than average because when they show it in slow motion, you can see that I did dip properly and I threw it with a lot of force. And him coming into the shot helped make the impact greater.

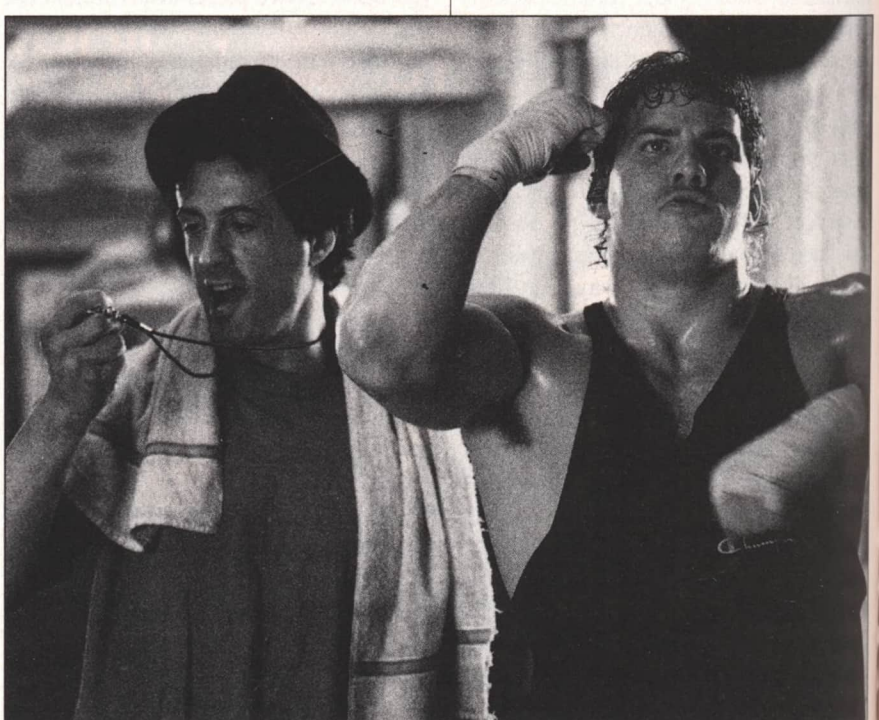
Q: Do you resent the amount of attention given to Douglas' weight? All the talk about it detracted from your performance.

A: I do resent a small portion of it. But people should know better. Even at that weight, Buster should have been able to go three rounds strong. It would have been quite different if the fight had gone to the seventh or eighth round, and conditioning played a part. But I hit him early with a good shot and got him right out of there. I hit him before his energy even had a chance to deflate.

Q: So the weight wasn't a factor in the fight.

A: I don't think so.

Q: Were you insulted that Douglas took



Holyfield declined a role in* Rocky V *because his character would have to come out on the short end against a real-life potential challenger, Tommy Morrison. That's how much he hates to lose!

Annie Holyfield raised her son a Christian, and despite the pressures of this business, Evander never wavered in his beliefs. In Foreman, he was facing another deeply religious warrior.

you so lightly during training, that he allowed himself to come into the ring in such poor condition?

A: It didn't even make any difference. I feel the way a fighter prepares shows his character. If everybody I fought in life prepared the way Buster did, it wouldn't bother me. That's their business. I'm only concerned with controlling the things that I do, preparing myself to go in there and fight.

Q: Quite a few people were surprised when you fired your co-manager, Ken Sanders, last year. Even more were shocked when the two of you recently reconciled. What caused the split and what led to you getting back together?

A: What caused the split is the fact that when I first met Ken, I was 20 years old and I was going to the Olympics. We had a good relationship, almost like a father-son relationship. At that time, I was young and I didn't know the business. Everything he said, I would go along with. It was always, "What do ya think I should do, Ken?"

As the years went by and I got older, I realized that *he* was working for *me*. I was the boss. He'd give me good advice, but when I matured enough to know what was right and wrong and wanted to make my own decisions, it bothered him. So we had a conflict. Finally, I told him, "We'll just depart." We both agreed to split up.

Q: Is it true that the breakup was triggered by your discovering that you owed more taxes than you thought you did?

A: Not exactly, 'cause I think that everybody makes mistakes. It was more a case of him trying to show me that I needed him, and me trying to show him that I could make it without him. The Buster Douglas fight showed him, "Hey, I'm my own man and I can make it without you." But when the fight was over, we got together, we talked, and he apologized. He said, "I'm sorry that I was too demanding. You're not a 20-year-old kid anymore, you're a 28-year-old man. You can take care of yourself. No need for me to try to govern you. I realize I should let you know that *I* work for you, you don't work for *me*." When he came down and humbled himself that way to me, and let me know that he could accept the responsibility of working for me and not controlling me, everything was fine.

I always liked him. He always worked in the best of my interests. As soon as he let me know that he realized I control the business, I brought him back again. Now everything is back like it used to be.

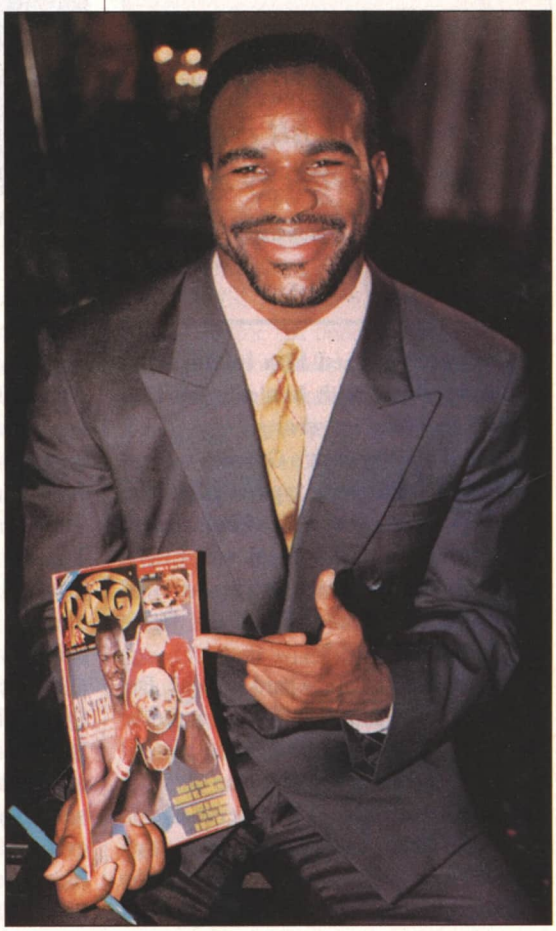
Q: It was reported that your patience with him ran out when he cursed you over the telephone.

A: He didn't curse me out. He said some words I didn't like. We just had a disagreement. The respect I still have for him comes from him not badmouthing me when we were apart. He didn't say anything bad about me and I didn't say anything bad about him.

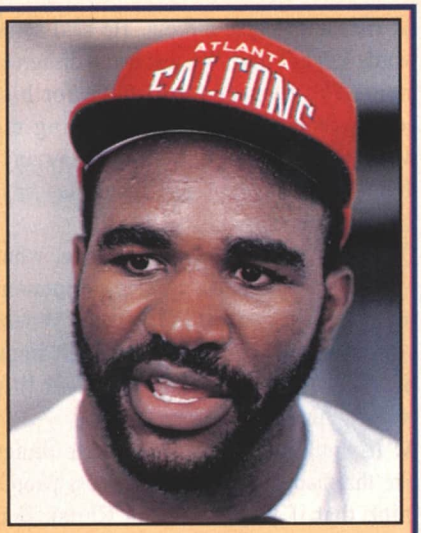
Q: Being as religious as you are, what would your reaction be if an opponent really cursed you out in the ring? Would your first impulse be to jam a left hook in his mouth, or would you feel like reading him a Bible verse?

A: It wouldn't bother me because things like that happen every day. I guess people think that if you believe in Christ, that means you're perfect. You're not perfect. Some of my best friends curse. It's not my job to say, "Look, stop cursing." They're grown people, they do things they want to do. People change because they want to change. I'm not going to try to change my whole camp or anything like that. I'll just believe in my beliefs and be strong with God.

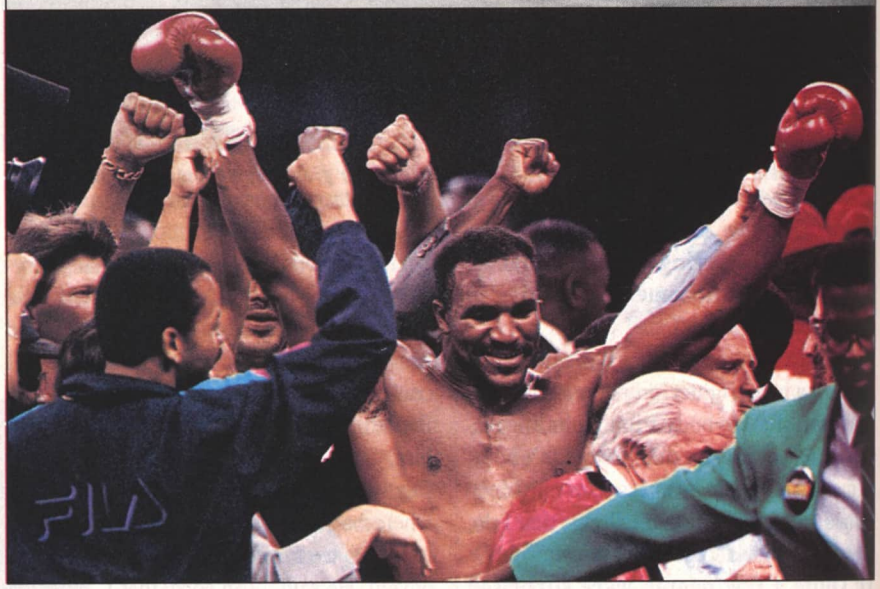
Q: George Foreman has told me that if



Perhaps the beaming Holyfield knew something the rest of the world would soon find out.



"It would have been quite different if the fight had gone to the seventh or eighth round, and conditioning played a part. But I hit him early with a good shot and got him right out of there. I hit him before his energy even had a chance to deflate."



Referee Mills Lane removes the mouthpiece from Douglas' mouth, ending his 8½-month title reign (top) and setting off a raucous celebration (above).

an opponent cursed him in the ring, he'd have a talk with him afterward to tell him how he went wrong.

A: *(Laughing)* Yep, that's George.

Q: Do you think your type of high-tech training—underwater workouts, exercise machines, and special weightlifting—will revolutionize boxing, or will the old habits of the trainers and fighters be hard to break?

A: They will probably be hard to break. But people should realize that if you want to be the best, you have to build onto the old things, add some new ideas to the old. You just can't let the old go on forever. If you look at the history of boxing, you'll see that the fighters of every era were better than the era before. I don't think the best fighters from the old days could beat the best fighters from today. You couldn't take somebody out of the past and bring him into today's boxing and have him be successful.

Q: Today's fighters would win?

A: Yes. Better condition. A lot stronger.

Q: Would you have beaten a Joe Louis and a Rocky Marciano?

A: If you take me in this era and compare it to them in their era, I would be better. Today's boxers know what the old guys knew, plus more. But if you brought them into this era, and they had the techniques and knowledge that I have, then it might be a different story.

Q: You'll be fighting Foreman and Tyson in your next two fights. Foreman is generally thought of as representing good, while Tyson, to many people, represents evil. Being a devout Christian, do you treat these two fighters differently, either before, during, or after the fight?

A: A person's character plays a part. You could say things to George, jokes and things, that you might not say to Tyson. I guess there's a wall Tyson puts around himself. If I came up and said, "Hello, George, how're you doing?" before a fight, it wouldn't bother him. That would probably bother Tyson. He's into hating the opponent. George smiles a lot, but he realizes that when he gets in the arena, he's gonna have to fight.

Q: You were offered a role in *Rocky V*, but you turned it down because it called for Tommy Morrison's character to knock you out on film. What was so disturbing about that?

A: I feel it would have been bad. I respect the movies and all that, because I know it's not real, but you don't bring in a guy who aspires to be the heavyweight champion of the world and get him knocked out in a movie. If Tommy Morrison was an actor, it'd be a little different. But he's in the game of boxing and he was going after the

Holyfield and Coca-Cola Executive Vice President M. Douglas Ivester (over Holyfield's left shoulder) pose with the first Coca-Cola USA/Evander Holyfield Atlanta Scholarship winners. "The Real Deal" hoped to land an endorsement contract with "The Real Thing."

same title as me. I didn't think a guy who had been to the Olympics and been cruiserweight champion like I had should have been knocked out by a man who had been fighting pro for only a year or two. Not even in the movies. That ain't right.

Q: Did you fear that might've given Morrison a psychological edge if you fought for real one day?

A: No, that would make no difference. It's really just that I wouldn't want to be portrayed as a loser to the public. It would bother me. I don't want to lose even in acting. I don't want to lose *in my sleep*. That's how bad I hate losing.

Q: Besides Tyson and Foreman, who are some of the fighters you anticipate might be a threat to you in the next year or so?

A: I see the heavyweight division shaping up like it was in the '70s. I truly think Razor Ruddock will be tough. I truly think that in a year, Riddick Bowe would be tough. Ray Mercer will be difficult in the early rounds because he's a very aggressive fighter, very determined. Lennox Lewis is up and coming, too. These are the tough fighters I will probably have to fight before I retire.

Q: What can we count on during your reign? What are we certain to see from Evander Holyfield the boxer and Evander Holyfield the person?

A: You're going to see Evander looking better in each and every fight. I think you ought to look forward to two fights a year, maybe three sometimes. It all depends on the quality of the opponent. I have debated with myself how many years I want to fight. Well, I think five more years will be enough.

Outside the ring, I'm looking forward to working with kids and getting endorsements that other fighters couldn't get because they were stereotyped. I'm happy now because I was able to sign with Coca-Cola, and Coca-Cola never signed a boxer because of the image people have of fighters. Hopefully, I can open that endorsement area for a lot of fighters, and I can prove that you don't have to be ignorant to be a boxer.

We had one heavyweight champion who was bad, but that doesn't mean all the rest of us are bad. People box for different reasons. I box because I love the game of boxing, not because I'm a violent person. I'm not rewarded for being the toughest man outside the ring. People have said to me, "Are you the baddest man in the world?" Well, I'm the baddest man *in the ring* in the world.

HOLYFIELD UPDATE

Even though he won a clear-cut decision over Foreman, Holyfield's struggle for respect continued, exacerbated by a close call in his next defense, a seventh-round kayo of late sub Bert Cooper, who had Holyfield in serious trouble before succumbing. A pedestrian points win over Larry Holmes did little to silence "The Real Deal's" critics, but oddly enough, when he lost the title to Riddick Bowe in November '92, Holyfield's valiant stand earned him new fans. He was back on top after regaining the title from Bowe in November '93, but briefly retired after losing to Michael Moorer the following year. Holyfield returned and finally gained the adulation he long deserved by knocking out Tyson in November '96. Holyfield's reputation continued to climb when he avenged his loss to Moorer via eighth-round kayo in November '97, but age and numerous ring wars began to show in his September '98 decision over Vaughn Bean. Since then, Holyfield has gone 2-3-2, losing the world title to Lennox Lewis and failing to regain the IBF belt against Chris Byrd in his most recent fight. Yet despite his vast wealth and Hall of Fame credentials, the 40-year-old Holyfield refuses to retire.

BACK ISSUES OF KO

Back issues of several editions of *KO Magazine,* the acknowledged leader in boxing journalism, are still available in limited quantity. Since its inception in 1980, *KO* has become known for its quality stories and columns and peak-action photographs. Don't delay. Supplies are running out!

June 1983: WBA Jr. Middleweight Champion Davey Moore: Bracing For Duran's Last Stand. Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Pinklon Thomas. Also: Duran-Cuevas, Hagler-Sibson.

Aug. 1983: Michael Spinks: King Of The Light Heavyweights ... But The Glory Can't Erase The Sadness. Color Pinup: Johnny Bumphus. Interview: Jones & Rappaport. Also: Jones-McCrory, Pryor-Arguello II preview, world's best fighter poll, Jeff Chandler, Mark Breland, Leon Spinks.

Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Jan. 1985: The Wide-Open Heavyweight Division: Who Will Take Control? Color Pinup: Bill Costello. Interview: Tyrone Crawley. Also: Harry Arroyo, Curry-Pryor, Barry McGuigan.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV,* world's best fighter poll.

July 1986: Tyson, McGuigan, Hagler: The Stars Catch Fire And Boxing Is Hot Again! Color Pinup: Azumah Nelson. Also: Camacho-Chavez.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

May 1987: Hagler vs. Leonard—The Clash Of The Superstars: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Edwin Rosario. Interview: Greg Haugen. Also: Bobby Czyz, Tyson & Bonecrusher.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Aug. 1987: Sweet Victory! Sugar Ray Humbles Hagler. Color Pinup: Leonard vs. Hagler. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Spinks-Cooney preview, Donald Curry.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

May 1988: *KO* Exclusive—Mike Tyson, As Only Mike Tyson Knows Him. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Tyson-Spinks poll, Michael Dokes, Virgil Hill.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO*'s Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Feb. 1989: George Foreman Is Born Again. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Bill Cayton. Also: The Olympics, Davey Hilton, John Mugabi, Barry McGuigan.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Nov. 1989: The Real Duran: The Stories Behind The Legend. Color Pinup: Orlando Canizales. Interview: Mike Trainer. Also: Edwin Rosario, Rosi-Van Horn.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

May 1990: Chavez vs. Taylor: The Best Matchup In The Last Five Years. Color Pinup: Daniel Zaragoza. Interview: Pernell Whitaker. Also: Leonard-Hearns, Glenn McCrory, Prince Charles Williams.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, best fighter poll.

Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

April 1991: The Ali Chronicles (First Of A Series). Color Pinup: George Foreman. Interview: Tommy Morrison. Also: Tyson-Stewart, Razor Ruddock, Leonard-Norris preview.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Nov. 1991: Mike Tyson—The Only Heavyweight That Matters. Color Pinup: Thomas Hearns. Interview: Troy Dorsey. Also: Fenech-Nelson, James Toney, bodypunching.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

Aug. 1992: Bowe Knows The Big Fight: The Top Contender Analyzes Holmes-Holyfield. Color Pinup: Julian Jackson. Interview: Michael Spinks. Also: Thomas Hearns, Blue Horizon, fighting fear, Toney-Barkley, Greg Haugen.

Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, All-Shavers.

Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

Feb. 1993: Strictly Business: George Foreman Fights For The Love Of It—The Money! Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: George Benton. Also: Tracy Spann, Oba Carr, greatest eras.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

May 1993: Recapping The Future: Julio Cesar Chavez' Road To 100-0. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Junior Jones. Also: Buddy McGirt, Riddick Bowe, Raul Marquez.

Dec. 1993: The *KO* Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

June 1996: Destined For The Hall Of Fame: Who's In, Who's Out. Color Pinup: Wayne McCullough. Interview: Cedric Kushner. Also: Danny Romero, Mark Breland, Dynamite Dozen—the next 12.

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Also: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

Dec. 1996: Andrew Golota—Taking The Low Road to Stardom. Color Pinup: Mark Johnson. Interview: Rock Newman. Also: De La Hoya-Gonzalez, Chuck Bodak, bizarre endings, Chavez-Rosario.

Winter 1996: This Is War! Holyfield-Tyson Will Be Explosive ... And Short. Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Riddick Bowe, David Reid, Holyfield-Qawi.

Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Also: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

Feb. 1997: *KO*'s 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Also: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

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BOBBY CHACON

"She Said It Would Make It Easier If She Got Out Of The Way"

LAST DECEMBER IN Sacramento, California, 31-year-old Bobby Chacon outgunned southpaw brawler Bazooka Limon to win the WBC junior lightweight title. The wild 15-round shootout, in which both fighters rose from the canvas to finish on their feet, was hailed by many as 1982's Fight of the Year. If you don't believe in miracles, you aren't familiar with Bobby Chacon.

Chacon, a handsome, amiable Mexican-American who draws fans by the thousands throughout the state of California, could not afford the $5 locker rental when he decided as a teenager to move his fighting from the street gangs of Los Angeles to the boxing rings. Gifted with natural speed and ring instincts, he was one of the most popular young fighters in the world when he kayoed another young prospect, Danny Lopez, in 1974. One fight and less than four months later, he was a world champion, having knocked out Alfredo Marcano with his booming right hand to capture the WBC featherweight title.

But Chacon was 22 and impetuous. He enjoyed the luxuries of life at the top, and before he could learn the value of the title, he lost it. In 1975, Ruben Olivares stopped a dried-out Chacon (who had been weakened by the struggle to drop more than 10 pounds the week before the bout) in two rounds in only his second title defense.

From 1975 to 1981, Chacon's career fluctuated. Several times he considered retirement, often to please his wife, Valorie, who felt he was chasing an unreachable dream. But somehow in his soul, Chacon knew there was a reason for fighting on.

After being stopped in junior lightweight title fights against Alexis Arguello in 1979 and Cornelius Boza-Edwards in 1981, Chacon was thought to be through. He had fought valiantly against Boza-Edwards, but didn't have the legs or reflexes to rally in the late rounds. He decided to retire. Those who cared for him could only hope it was a final decision; they knew he had not yet dismissed that elusive dream.

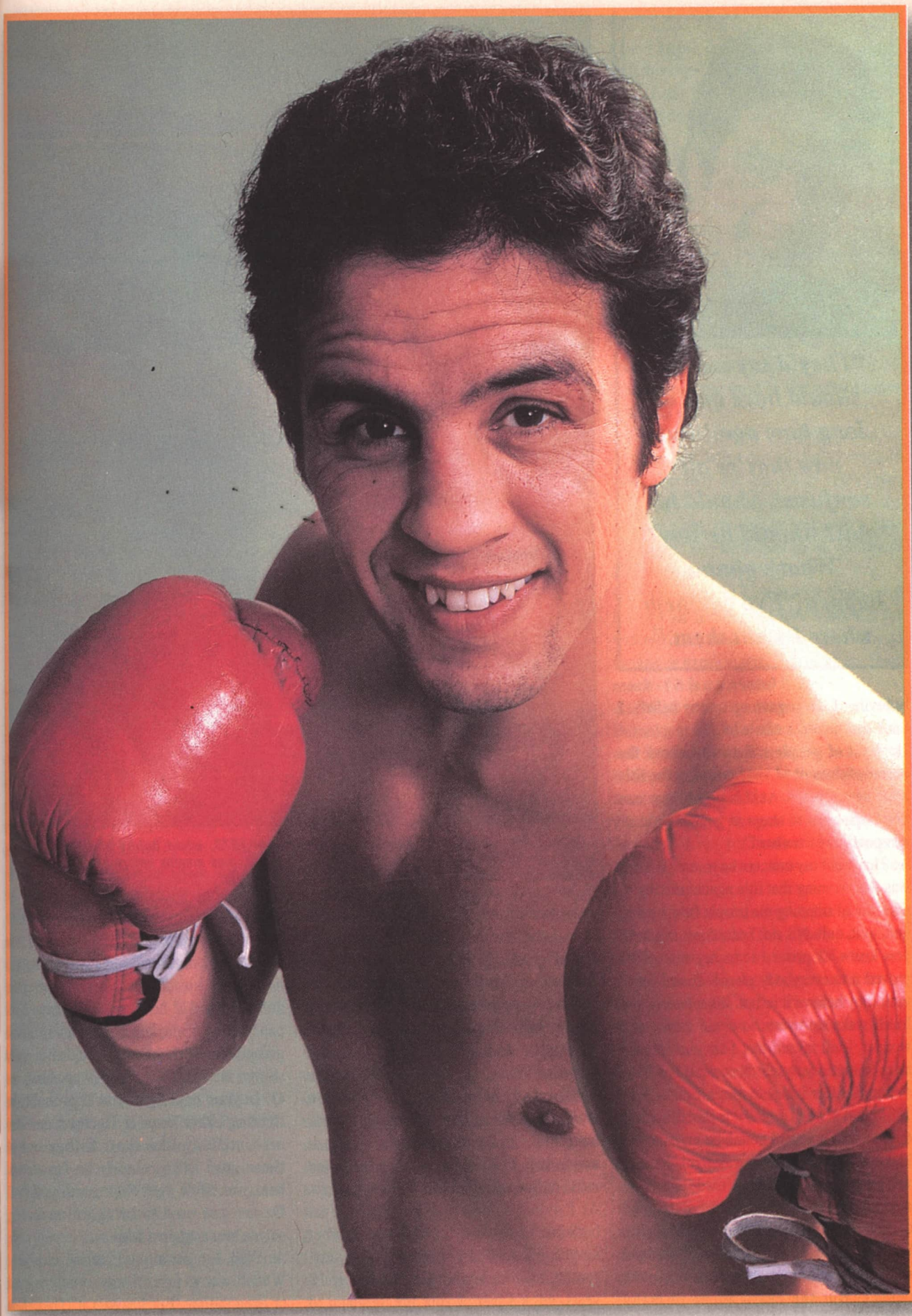
In March 1982, Valorie Chacon, distraught over her husband's insistence on continuing his career, placed a gun to her head and killed herself. Chacon had a fight scheduled the next day and refused to postpone it. Following a script Hollywood couldn't resist (the movie about Chacon's life will be made later this year), Chacon scored a knockout, fought on, and secured the fateful title shot against Limon. Today, seven years after losing his first title, he is again a world champion.

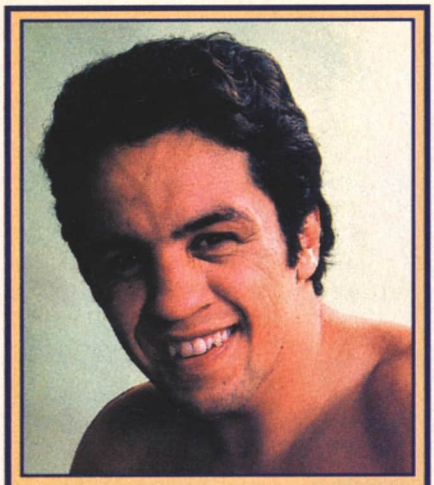
Chacon spoke with Steve Farhood from his home in Oroville, California, in February, shortly afer undergoing surgery to remove bone chips from his nose. (He is expected to make his first defense in May.) It was Valorie's birthday, and Chacon said that later that night, he and his three children would recognize the occasion with a birthday cake. Chacon spoke of the Limon fight, the tragic death of his wife, and the golden days when he was known as "The Schoolboy." His life, he says, has gone full cycle.

Interview conducted February 1983

Q: Do you believe in miracles?

A: I'm proof that miracles happen. I believe in a lot of things, and I just kept



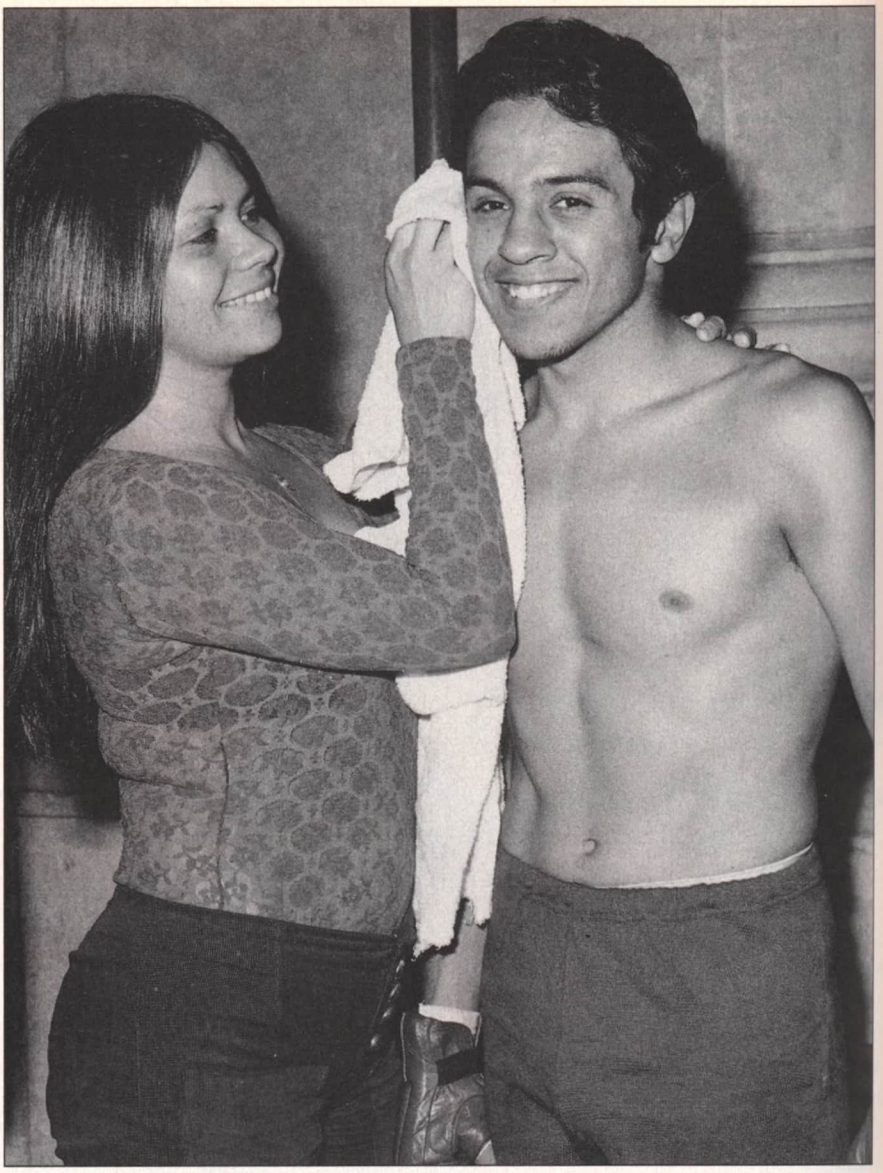


"They'd say ... 'He should have quit a long time ago.' But now they're all confused. Should he quit? Should he stay? What's gonna happen? I've got them where I want them."

believing. I never gave up on my beliefs. I think that helped a whole lot.

Q: A lot of people still can't believe the accomplishment of your winning the title after seven years. At this point, how can you hope even to stage as good a fight or a repeat performance?

A: That's not my concern anymore. What it was was winning that title again, proving to myself and stopping the people from saying quit, quit, quit. No, no, I can't quit in peace, you know? I proved it to myself, and I proved it to everybody else. It doesn't matter if they believe it or not. It happened, and I still wake up every now and then and I wonder. I tell myself that I am champion. I have to remind myself, because it has been so long. After I lost to Boza-Edwards in 1981, that's when I really grabbed hold of the fact that it wasn't gonna be given to me like it was in 1974, and I was gonna have to work for this one. So that made me more determined than ever to keep fighting and to do it right. And I finally got it right, after I lost to Boza-Edwards, and that's why I wanted my wife to give me just one more chance. But she heard about so many chances so many times before. And she gave up this time.



Life was different for the young Chacons back in 1973, when Bobby had been fighting professionally only two years. Less than a decade later, nine months before her husband would miraculously regain the title, Valorie would take her own life.

Q: After the Boza fight, in which you fought so gallantly and fell just a little bit short, I spoke to your friend John Wood. He was speaking about your future, and he said he thought you would quit, but he wasn't sure. He said he still felt the dream was there. How close did you come to deciding you had given it your best shot, and you just didn't have it anymore. Did that ever enter your mind?

A: I didn't come close to it at all. Just because of my wife, I did say maybe, maybe I'll quit. I knew once you start something like boxing when I did at 18 years old, it's part of your life. It's hard to walk away from something when you think you're the best at something, and you haven't accomplished what you wanted. I never gave up the hope of doing it again, and I proved it now. It could have happened sooner maybe. I had a good streak going before my wife died, and that really slowed me down. It almost stopped me.

Q: In your next fight, you'll probably be fighting either Boza or Hector Camacho, or somebody like that. Either one of those guys will probably be favored to beat you. How does that make you feel? Or are you used to being an underdog, as you were against Limon.

A: Well, I'm getting used to the idea now. When I was younger, I was usually favored or even money. But I expect it. They think

Chacon receives some pointers from the legendary Sugar Ray Robinson before his 16th pro fight, against Arturo Pineda. Whatever he said must have worked. Chacon beat the 17-1 Pineda by fifth-round kayo.

I'm so old. Like I say, they're not too sure of what ... or how I want it. And Camacho, being as young as he is and making a big scream, has to be favored no matter who he fights against. And Boza-Edwards, beating me before, he's gotta be favored the second time, too. But I beat Bazooka, and I fought him four times. You learn from the mistakes you made. And I learned from my mistakes with Boza-Edwards. I hurt him in the first round, so I tried to knock him out and I lost everything. Now I don't care if I hurt him in the first round again this time, I'm just gonna keep picking and scoring points. My main concern is to be ahead in the fight, and as the fight wears on and we get closer to the end, then I can work a little harder for a knockout.

Q: How about Camacho? What are your observations of him so far?

A: Well, he's a talented kid. He can move real good on his feet, he looks like he's even starting to learn to punch a little bit, throwing those shorter punches. But he's not the big, stronger puncher, and I'm really not in awe of him at all. In fact, in his last fight, he started to look slower than he had before. He got that lucky punch in, and John [Montes] was just caught cold. I don't think that would happen to me, getting caught cold like that. I think it would be a good fight. I'd give him a lot of pressure. I could take the punch. I've taken punches before, and I'll make it awfully hard for him to beat me anyway.

Q: A little bit about the Limon fight. One writer said to me that he thought it was a great fight, but in was not a great boxing match. It was purely a brawl, with a little skill exhibited. How do you react to that?

A: Well, he must not have a very good eye, because I was missing a lot of punches. On the ropes I was letting him tire himself out. That's boxing. I'm moving around in the ring. When he gets too strong, too hard, I move out. There were a lot of things happening that day I guess he didn't see. As the end came closer, then I was able to put a little more force into my fight. So there was a lot going on. It just depends on the fellow looking at it and how he saw the fight. He saw it different from the way I was fighting it.

Q: How much of that performance, which was such a magnificent performance, do you attribute to physical conditioning, and how much of it do you attribute to the mental preparation that you obviously had?

A: Well, I prepared really well for this fight. I was running five miles a day for an hour, a little over five miles. It was mostly the conditioning. I was mentally prepared, like I said, after losing to Boza. I knew what I had to do, and I knew I was gonna do it this time. That was just pacing. I burnt myself out last time. I wasn't gonna do that. I was in good shape then, but I just threw too many punches too early and saved nothing for the end. Also in that last fight, I only boxed four rounds in the gym, whereas this time I boxed 10 rounds a day, and the difference was in that my trainer, Joe Ponce, wasn't with me then. He's the one who got me in shape for this fight. But mentally I was prepared for this fight, for whatever was gonna happen. I knew I could take a punch, and I was willing to accept those things.

Q: Did you ever want to win a fight more than this one?

A: No, never. I knew in my heart that ... What could I do if I lost this fight? It would most definitely put me out of everything. They'd give up all hope on me. They'd say, "You're right. He should have quit a long time ago." But now they're all confused. Should he quit? Should he stay?

Q: You've fought Limon four times, and I know in the press there's been a lot written and said about the two of you having a grudge with each other. How much of it is a personal thing?

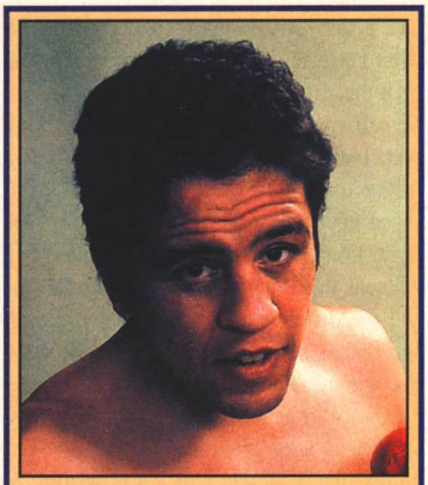
A: Well, it's all personal. I didn't like Bazooka at all. It developed after our second fight, when he was telling people that Bobby was a dirty fighter. To begin with, his big thing was how he beat Bobby Chacon the first time, and he mouthed off and stuff. Even before the fight, they said that I was washed-up. It would be an easy fight for him.

Q: Did you two do any talking before this fight, or during this fight?

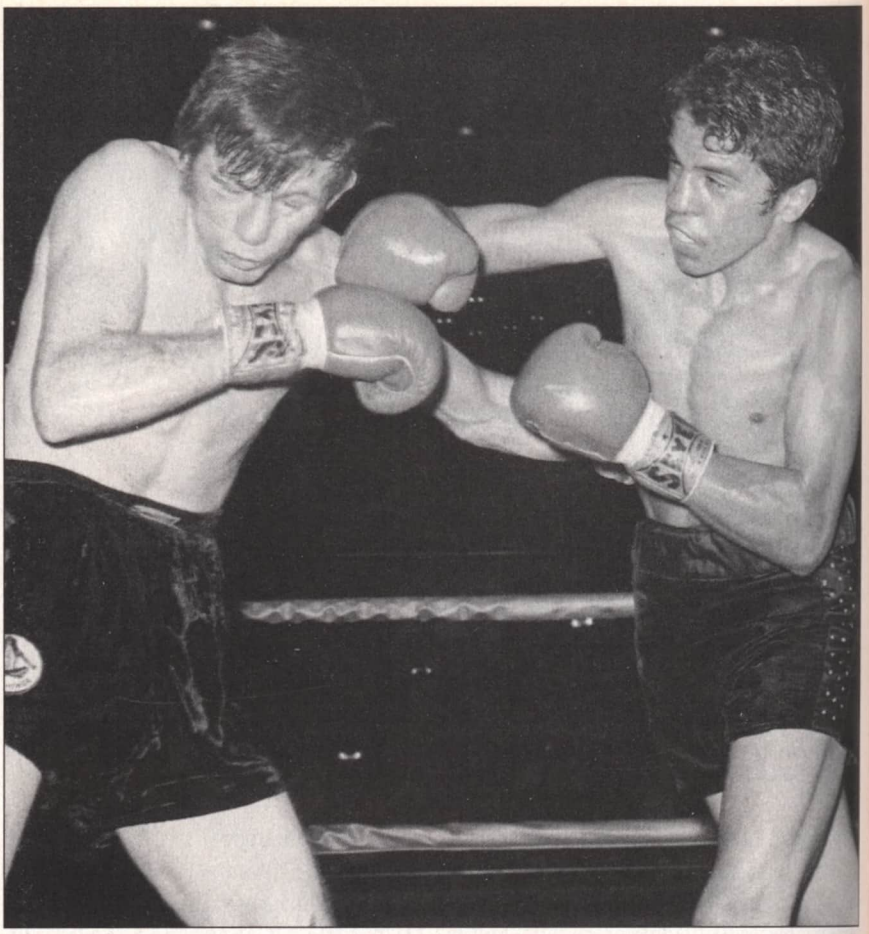
A: We didn't want to see each other. We skipped each other at the press conference. One time I came early, the other time he came early. We just didn't want to see each other. Not at all.

Q: Have we seen the last of Chacon and Limon, or do you think there might be another one?

A: No way. I don't want to fight him, because I proved it to him, and he knows it. He doesn't want to fight me anymore, because finally I've given him what I've always wanted to. The first time (a 10-round decision loss) I was completely out of shape. I had just come from two weeks in Hawaii with my wife. Then here comes



"My daughter, 12 years old, gets up on a box and hugs me and says, 'Dad, we gotta be strong.' That's all I needed. It made me strong. My baby sure didn't have to tell me that."



In a battle of unbeaten West Coast feathers, Chacon stopped Danny "Little Red" Lopez in nine rounds in May '74, assuring him a shot at WBC champion Alfredo Marcano.

Bazooka, and he's pretty tough. He was in good condition, he didn't have any boxing ability, but he was rugged and tough that first time. It was a close fight. I got tired after four rounds, and after that I just held on. I came out of that fight bleeding when I urinated, and I had a big lump on my head from getting hit on the top of the head. But he couldn't do nothing with me. The second time (a seven-round technical draw), I got set because I knew what happened the first time. And I'm ready to knock him out. He's looking for a place to hide. The referee steps in and gives him a break. I guess he didn't believe what was happening that time. The third time comes along, and again I didn't get set, three or four weeks in the gym is all. And it was a real close decision my way this time. So he's yelling robbery and everything. I was thinking about the second time, when I got robbed. But he's yelling robbery. What do you got to do to win the fight? Do you have to kill the guy? So this fourth time was the one we both wanted. He wanted to prove what a man he was to me, and vice versa. I just always felt that I knew the reason why I lost to him the first time, and I knew that if I got in shape, I would be too much for him to handle. Well this time, the fourth time, he was much tougher than the other two times. I give him credit for that. He is a much better fighter now than he was then.

Q: I remember watching the last five rounds and saying, "Well, now it's Limon's fight," because everyone is used to seeing Limon in the last rounds be the aggressor, and everyone saw you, against Boza kind of poop out. When you started coming on, landing bodypunches, did it seem to you that he was shocked or surprised?

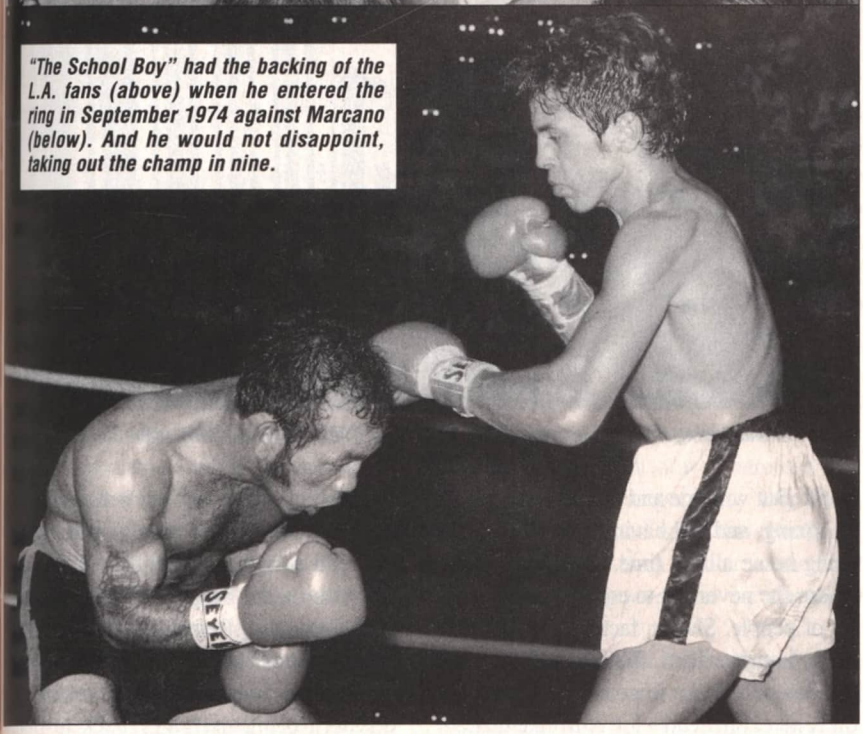
A: Yeah. It did seem like he was waiting on me. He was waiting for me to get tired in the last rounds, and it never happened. In fact, he was the one who got tired. It was a matter of experience—that I learned from Boza-Edwards—and a matter of me getting in top shape for the fight.

Q: How tired were you in those last five rounds?

A: Tired? I wasn't. Every now and then in a fight, you get a little fatigued, but then you forget all about it; that's conditioning. It's not like you have time to think about it. You realize that this is a hard fight, I'm a little tired. I did remember thinking that, but I was able to keep going. Throughout the fight I was wondering when I would get tired, but it never happened.

Q: What was your attitude, and what was the attitude in your corner going into that last round. You couldn't have known who was ahead, because it was really close. And as it turned out, you did need the knockdown.

A: It's a good thing I didn't listen to the corner. They told me to go out there and take it easy, that I had the fight won. I wasn't in any trouble. I started thinking, *Wait a minute, I've been knocked down twice. That's a lot of points, especially since he's the champion.* You never know, there are all kinds of political things going on. Referee-buying and everything. And so I just knew that this is the last round. In all my fights, I've been a last-round fighter. If I was still there, then that's when I tried for the knockout. And I usually got it. This



"The School Boy" had the backing of the L.A. fans (above) when he entered the ring in September 1974 against Marcano (below). And he would not disappoint, taking out the champ in nine.

ime I came real close. But it was enough to get me the fight.

Q: When the scorecards were read, and you heard you had won, think back and tell me the first thing that went through your mind.

A: Well, even before the scorecards were read, I was wondering why they were reading the cards, because I thought it was a knockout. He was down, the fight was over, so I figured that the fight was over because I won it by knockout. And then he's reading the cards, and I'm looking at him and I'm wondering what's going on. I heard the scores. They didn't mention who the cards were in favor of, but they were ahead in my favor by a couple of points. Before they announced me the winner, I started clapping. I knew I won. I didn't realize it was that close. No way did I realize that. It's a good thing that it turned out I was the winner, or else there would have been a riot. And I would have been part of it.

Q: Moving away from the Limon fight, you will never forget, and will always be affected by, your wife's death. A lot of different emotions must have been going through you when you fought the night after Valorie died.

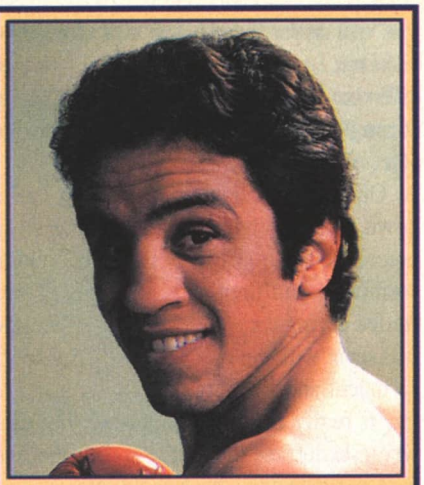
A: Oh man, no kidding. I completely broke down after the fight. I couldn't go to sleep before the fight, just thinking about Valorie so much. And then after the fight, I just started crying for a couple of days, like she was there with me or something. I sensed it so much, and I just started crying a whole lot. It really felt good this time, because when she left me the first ... well, when she died and then came back in my dreams, she was there for about three or four seconds, and in that time said her goodbyes. But this time, she was here for like a couple of days, like she was finally saying goodbye to me the way I wanted to see her say goodbye. It was really a lovely thing. I was crying like hell.

Q: Did you feel any anger toward her, as if you wanted to tell her, "See, you were wrong. You were wrong about me"?

A: I thought that many times, yeah. I thought that many times. That was exactly what I was thinking. "You should have waited. I told you that I finally got it right." But, it was such a long time. From '75, when I was champion, to 1980. We had five years of truly nonsense things, and I will always feel bad about my whole life.

Q: Was fighting the day after she died the hardest thing you ever had to do in your life?

A: Yeah, it was. It was hard. But one thing it did, it kept me together. I know I had something else on my mind that I had to take care of, so it gave me a break from her. My mom called me at just about noon before I was going to the gym and told me that Valorie shot herself. I don't know, I went into a trance or something. I didn't know what to do for about one minute. For about one minute, I was in shock. Then I said, "Wait a minute. I have to fight tomorrow. I've got the kids at home, I've gotta get home and see what happened. I was in camp. I've gotta get home. So I flew home. The car was burnt out, but I drove it home. And she was on the bed ... I mean next to the bed, and she was just as beautiful as ever, except there was blood right next to her head. They didn't even move her. The gun was right next to her. It was a shocking thing. And then having to fight that night. It helped me



"I won't be too brave now that I'm champion. I say that and then I fight Bazooka Limon like a madman, so there's no telling what you are going to do in the ring once you're in there."

some. In fact, I went that same day back to camp and I fought the next day. It wasn't until after the fight was over that I finally got a chance to let it all go, to drain myself. I was crying. Coming back to the kids and them being so great to me. My daughter, 12 years old, gets up on a box and hugs me and says, "Dad, we gotta be strong." That's all I needed. It made me strong. My baby sure didn't have to tell me that. I just gotta pull myself together for these guys, and that's just exactly what I've done.

Q: I know Valorie had expressed her dislike for your continuing to fight, but did you ever, anywhere along the way, think that she had the potential to do what she did?

A: She kept telling me. I never believed her. No. She kept telling me that she felt old, and that she'd probably be dead by 31. It's a funny thing that I never believed her. She kept telling me about that thing about death. She started saying that around 1978, and that was already a couple of years after I lost the title. So it already started coming in on her, I guess. But I always tried to talk with her, pull her out of it as much as I could. But with me and boxing, being away in boxing, and her having three babies and being home all the time, she had problems where she never got to communicate with a lot of people. She, in fact, in the last days, in the last year here, she was really alone a lot. She didn't like to go out. It was always quiet here. She read a lot, stuff like that.

Chacon was loving life (and his new Bentley) early in 1975, but everything was about to change.

Q: So she had no outlet for her emotions.

A: No. And I was even telling her to go out and get a job. Maybe that would help. And I think that also frustrated her, because she did try and get one, and people turned her down. She couldn't get a job. Getting jobs is hard for everybody, especially for a person that hasn't been working for a long time. So she took it personally, and that also bothered her very much.

Q: Today, Bobby, how do you rationalize her death?

A: Well, a couple of ways. She wanted to help me. She wanted to help after I lost the title and was then struggling all that time. She wanted to be part of the family and contribute to it. Before she died, she handwritten a letter to my manager (Joe Ponce), who was also a producer, and told him that this will bring the glory back to Bobby. "My dying will bring something back to him. And maybe they'll make a picture about me," she wrote. "I've got the perfect ending. I'm gonna kill myself with a bullet." And she said, "Please be sure and give Bobby all the money." She wanted to contribute. In this way, we had such a good love. I guess in this way, this was one of the things she wanted to give me. And I admit that it has helped a whole lot. But I hate it. I hate it. I'd rather have her than anything like that.

What I feel also is that we could have made it anyway together, you know. I was on that road back to the right way. I'd been champion young, and after all those foolish years, I was again on the way to … you know, I'm thinking right now, I knew what I was in boxing for, and why I was there. I wanted to make money for her. I think we could've made it if she would've waited just a bit more.

Q: If she were still alive, Bobby, how do you think she would have reacted on the day you won the title back?

A: I know she would have been very, very happy. But it bothered her for me to be champion, because there were people around all the time. Like I said, she was getting away from people, she was afraid of people, and she didn't want that again. That's another reason that she stepped out of the way, because she knew that …she must have felt that I was gonna win it again. She said it would make it easier if she got out of the way, and I think that is what she was talking about, because of all the publicity that goes with it. She couldn't handle it.

Q: Do you feel at this point that the Bobby Chacon story has gone full cycle in a way?

A: Oh, I know it has. I mean, my childhood isn't even included in the story, but that had a whole lot to do with my life. Now going to these days, it's kind of full cycle. For now on, I really feel good about life, and about living. I think that I won't make the mistakes that I made when I was younger and didn't realize what the heck I was doing. That involved the meaning of respect and love, and I'll never lose it.

Q: Going back to the first championship, things obviously came a lot easier for you then. You had so much raw talent, you were so quick, and you punched so hard with the right hand. Describe the difference between the Bobby Chacon of then and now in the ring.

A: Back then, it was easier. I ran once or twice a week. I didn't have to do anything for it. It just came so easy. Probably because when I was hungry, at 18 years old, I had learned to dedicate myself so well, with eating and training, and I wanted to be a fighter. And then when I got there, and started making the good money, I forgot about having the training, how I got there to begin with. The training, the time

After having trouble making weight, Chacon was blown out in two rounds by Ruben Olivares at the Great Western Forum in June '75, dropping the WBC featherweight title.

in the gym, I even fired Joe Ponce, my manager, at that time. And it was just a state of confusion for me. The difference is the confusion and letting things get in my way, and not thinking about what I have to be doing to maintain that level. So it just got away from me. It just escaped me. That's the difference right there. Because now I know what it is, I know what it means, and I won't let it get away from me. I'll do all the things I've got to do to be in top shape, because fighting is the most important thing right now. There can't be anything else that can get in my way. It has a time and space, and when this time is up, that's it, and it's back into training. And when the fight goes, then we can do it again.

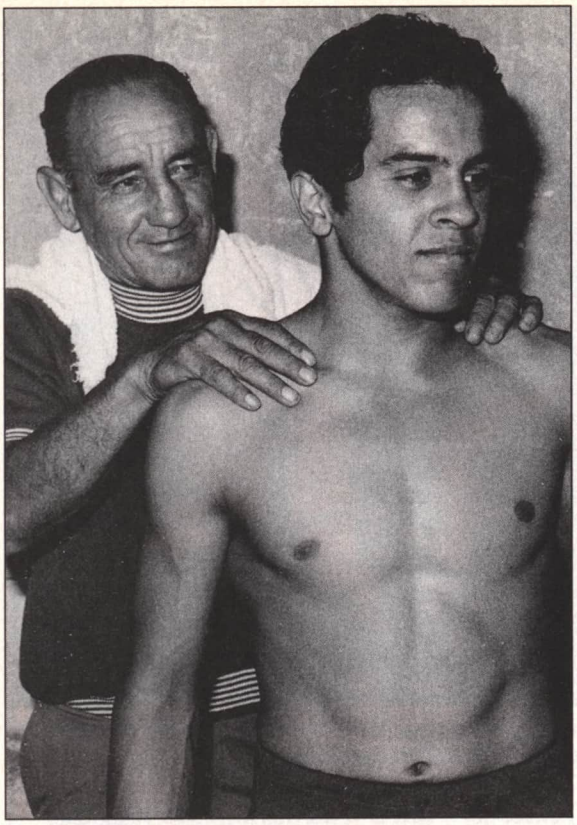
Q: In terms of skills in the ring, I guess with your moves and your reflexes and what you lose in speed, you gain in experience.

A: Yes, that's it. I was thinking same thing. My hands haven't slowed down so much. A lot of the power is still there. Well, just because I've been running so much, my legs even feel good. So I'm probably a little slower, but I don't feel much slower. I feel pretty good still. And like you say, having experience gives you a whole lot more.

Q: Describe a little bit of what it was like in the mid-'70s fighting on the West Coast. You were a pretty big hero out there. What was the whole thing like?

A: Having no money at 17, and going to the gym and having them tell me I needed $5 to start boxing. I was heading out of the gym. I wasn't gonna do that. I couldn't afford it. And then this guy says, "Come with me" and he takes me into this gym, and from day one it just was a … a shot out of the cannon, and I never stopped until I won that title. Me and Danny [Lopez] boxed in the gym, and they were wars all the time. I was busy all the time. The people didn't know about me, because I was fighting for the Forum, and Danny was fighting at the Olympic all the time. When we fought, they favored Danny because they had seen him more and they hadn't seen me. And then once I beat him, things just took off. They packed the Olympic, and they overflowed into the Sports Arena for my first title defense against Popularo (Jesus) Estrada. And for my second one against Ruben Olivares, they filled the Forum. It was a record gate at that time, so it was just a great ride.

Q: In those days, you made good money, but the kind of money the lighter weight fighters make today, thanks to Sugar Ray Leonard, is really frightening. You're talking about millions. In one fight, you could have made more than you made in a hundred fights. Do you ever think about that?



Trainer Joe Ponce stuck by Chacon through some tough times, when nobody—particularly Valorie—thought he would ever find his way back to the top.

A: Yeah. In fact, I usually tell that to the boys who work with me down at the gym. You take care of yourself, and there's a lot of money out there. That's the whole thing. And another thing, if you wait too long, if you can't get your mind together, and you're 25 and you're 26, these are all years you're wasting. Just like I wasted all those years of making money. Those are money-making years, the best years of your life, when you're so young, especially in a game like boxing, where you have to be young. You make more money. You can't be around forever. Maybe you can stay around for a little while, but there's a lot of years you lose. Look at Eusebio Pedroza, who's 30. He's been doing it for about 15 or 16 title defenses, and that gives them an idea of what I'm talking about. While Bobby Chacon had it, was making it, and threw it away, and waited until he was 31. And how many more years has Bobby Chacon got?

Q: Right. Every fight now is one by one.

A: That's right. I don't want to fight much longer. I've been here long enough. I want to get what I can. I would love a $10-million fight like Sugar Ray, but I know there's no hope there. I'd have to stick around for a while and prove myself a little bit, and have somebody else come and do the same thing. I don't want to stay around that long. Especially with all the time I've spent here, 13 years, and the punches I have taken, it's just a matter of time before they start catching up with me. And so I don't want to stay that long. Two, three fights at the most, two or three good fights at the most.

Q: You've been through so many different kinds of fights. Do you feel now as champion that there's really nothing that can happen to you in the ring that you can't handle?

A: Yeah, that's true. I do feel that way. I'm never in danger. I know that I won't risk anything. I won't be too brave now that I'm champion. I say that and then I fight Bazooka Limon like a madman, so there's no telling what you are going to do in the ring once you're in there. But I only want a few more, a few more good ones, and I'm glad I've come back this far. A lot of people missed Bobby Chacon when he was young. At least I can show a little bit of myself.

Q: There's obviously quite a difference between the days of your growing up as a teenager with no money in the streets, and then all of a sudden—it must have seemed like all of a sudden—you were on top of the world. What were some of the differences?

A: Well, the differences started when I was playing baseball all my life. And after I found out I wasn't big enough for those type of sports, I joined a gang and I stayed with the gang until I started boxing. I always got in a lot of trouble, because I was that type of kid. I was small, and the gang members just didn't give me any kind of respect, but I earned it real quick. Then, as soon as I met Valorie, I left the club, and she introduced me to boxing, and I didn't see the boys for maybe two years. I was busy keeping myself on top. My name was in the paper and everything. All of a sudden, my friends were all back. These are the differences in growing up, between the gangs, and being a working person and making a life for yourself. Then all of a sudden, the gang's back like they'd never been away.

Q: I think every champion goes through that. All of a sudden they have five million friends.

A: That's what it was. Me not knowing what's going on, I took them back and I joined them. Then, instead of taking care of business at home, I was loose a lot.

Q: A lot of the same people who were around you when you were champion must have disappeared again in the years when you were without the championship.

A: Yeah. Again, I got my old lifestyle where I didn't have a lot of people around me.

Q: Did you feel that by continuing fighting in the years when Valorie was asking you to stop, starting in 1978, that you were neglecting your marriage or your kids?

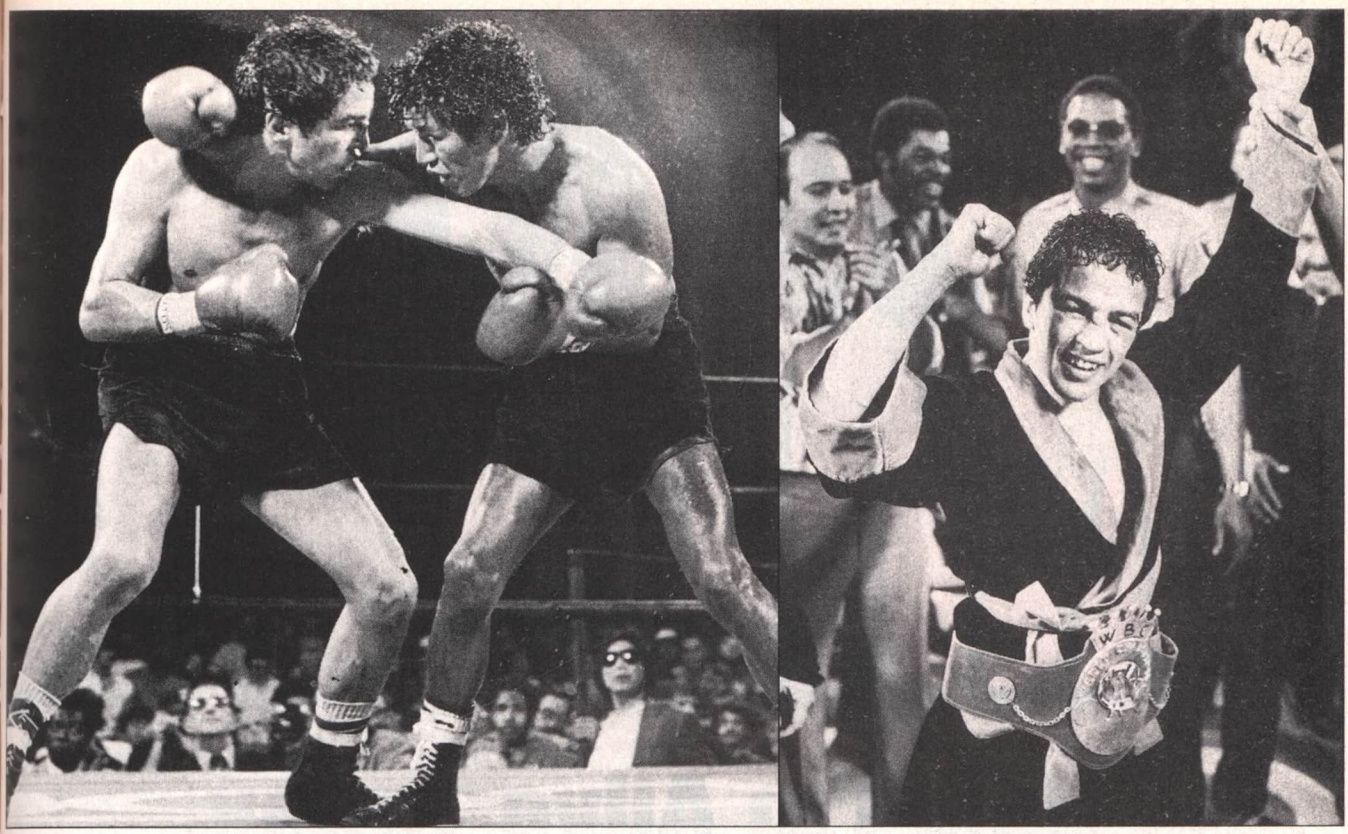
A: At that time, I didn't think about it, but I look back on it and I know that I was. Being busy with boxing and leaving the kids at home with Mama—and like I said, Valorie had a baby in '70, had a baby in '73, and had a baby in '75—you could call that neglect. Not being able to be with her and having the babies running around. She had to take care of the babies. These are things you just don't realize growing up, and a lot of kids make that mistake. I made mine.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your past in terms of boxing. You've fought a lot of great fighters. If you had to pick the best fighter you ever fought and the toughest fight you ever fought, what would they be?

A: Well, I think the toughest and one of the smartest fighters was Ruben Olivares. He taught me my first lesson in boxing. I fought him three times, too. And Alexis Arguello was a great fighter—I mean, *is* a great fighter, Danny Lopez would be right after them.

Q: Is it accurate to say that you've been as high and as low emotionally as a man can get?

A: Yeah, I think so *(laughs)*. I learned a whole lot. With Valorie dying, it taught me a lot of things. How to love, respect, and treat people the way they want to be treated. One thing I learned is that when you're with somebody, like your wife, that ... what is it, you always hurt the one you love? Well,



Winning the WBC title by unanimous decision over Bazooka Limon in Sacramento in December 1982 (left) was a bittersweet moment in his life. He had reclaimed his glory, but Valorie was not their to share the moment (right).

that's very true. You just don't realize it because you're there with them so much. I think back, and I say, why do I treat her like this, and it was because I loved her to begin with. What attracted me to her, you forget these things. I knew I forgot those things. Those are the things you learn. I've been on the top of the ladder, too. Where I am now you can say. The first time, it was really crazy, being on top. But this time, it's not crazy. It's business, and I love it.

Q: You must understand the value of the championship better this time.

A: That's what it is. I understood nothing of it before. And now I just take care, and rub it and pet it. Understand that I do love it, because boxing is just like a wife. That's what Valorie hated about it, because it took so much of my time and energy, and I treated ... no, she thought I treated the boxing world better than I treated her. She said that sometimes. But you have to treat boxing good, because it lives with you. If you don't, it knows.

Q: With the kind of life you've had, you must at this point be a little bit of a philosopher in some ways. Could you share a little bit of your philosophy of life?

A: You need guidance growing up. One thing that kids think is that they know it all, right? I know my babies are gonna grow up thinking they know everything. If they could get some help along the way, some answers, there ought to be someone there for the kids to give them that help along the road. You've gotta take care of your babies. And then once you get there, what I think it is, is treating other people well, the ones you're closest to. You always hurt the one you love. I think you gotta change that. You should always love the one you love. And give them the most rather than somebody else, somebody you meet on the street. You get it at home, so you should give it at home. I think the love thing is more important than anything. There's problems all over the world, but you want to forget those problems to a point and bring your happiness into your home and into your own life, and forget about those other trivial things, like war and stuff like that. If the world goes into war and everyone gets killed, there will be no problems. But until that happens, there's gonna be problems in the home. So, in between work and everything, the home is what we have to concentrate on. You've gotta keep it all in balance.

CHACON UPDATE

Chacon had one more moment of glory after this interview was conducted, successfully defending the WBC super featherweight title against Boza-Edwards in another slugfest, which was selected as THE RING's Fight of the Year for 1983. Unable to make the 130-pound division limit, he moved up to lightweight and was stopped by Ray Mancini in a bid to win the WBA 135-pound crown. Chacon kept fighting until June '88, and although he won his final seven bouts, by the end was reduced to fighting nonentities for chump change. His overall record was 59-7-1 (47). Trouble and tragedy continued to stalk Chacon. He was put on probation after being convicted of beating his second wife, Debrah, in '84 and briefly jailed in '88 for violating probation. In 1991 his 17-year-old son, Bobby Jr., was killed in a gang confrontation. Today, Chacon suffers slurred speech, loss of memory, disorientation, and other classic symptoms of pugilistica dementia. He still lives in Los Angeles, surviving on medical disability.

JAKE LaMOTTA

"How I'm Alive Today, I'll Never Know"

WE ALL KNOW Jake LaMotta can take a lot of punishment. But the shots LaMotta took in 1998 forced "The Bronx Bull" to call upon his resiliency more than anything Sugar Ray Robinson ever pelted him with. LaMotta endured the most devastating one-two combination imaginable, as his only two sons, Jake Jr. (better known as Jack) and Joe, died seven months apart. Jack was a victim of cancer, while Joe was killed in September's SwissAir Flight 111 crash. And though the old tendency for tragedies to come in threes was upheld, the impact of those two concussive blows made the third shot, the death of LaMotta's favorite ballplayer, Joe DiMaggio, hardly even noticeable for the Hall of Fame middleweight champ.

But just like in his famous fight against Laurent Dauthuille, LaMotta has summoned his strength and found a way to fight on even though all signs point to defeat. Life goes on for the 77-year-old LaMotta, and, by all appearances, life is still good.

The LaMotta story is quite familiar not only to boxing fans, but also to a lot of people who never saw him fight, because of the film Raging Bull, the 1980 classic based on LaMotta's autobiography. Now, however, the rage is mostly gone, and what remains is a gentle old man who would probably be easier for Wilfred Brimley to portray than for Robert DeNiro. LaMotta's passion now is the nightclub routine he's been entertaining audiences with for decades, and though he doesn't take the stage as regularly anymore, his one-liners remain an essential element of any interview he gives, and any casual conversation he has. He also spends some of his time promoting LaMotta's Tomatta Sauce, the marinara that his son Joe started selling in 1994, until his death left the company in his father's hands. If you can't find the sauce on the shelves of your local supermarket, it's available by calling 1-800-LAMOTTA, Jake is quick to point out.

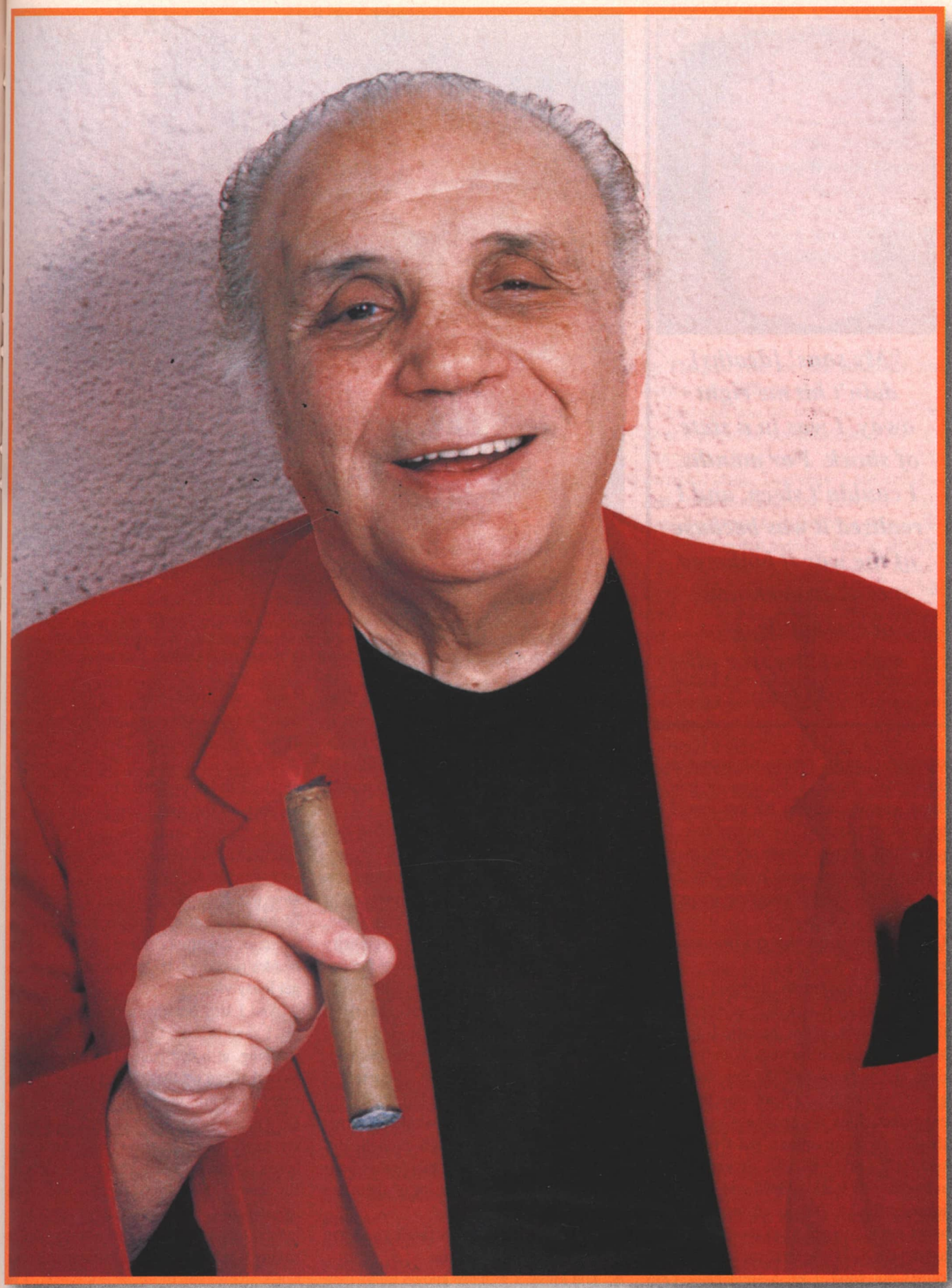
Managing Editor Eric Raskin had the pleasure of interviewing LaMotta in early-May at the champ's favorite restaurant, an Italian joint a few blocks away from his apartment on New York City's East Side called La Maganette.

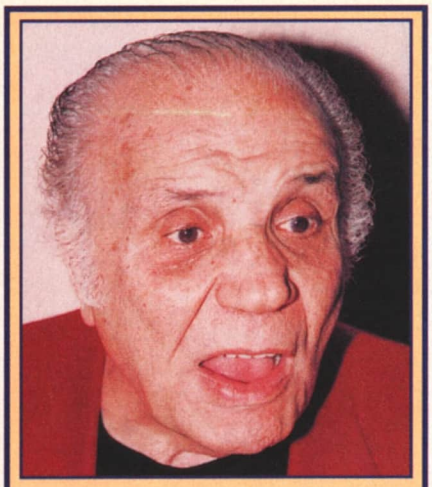
Raskin reports: "There are few more entertaining interview subjects than Jake LaMotta because of his tendency to start performing his comedy routine with only the slightest provocation. That frequently forced me to work a little harder to get answers out of him instead of jokes, and sometimes he still answered his own questions instead of those I was asking him, but he was always enlightening, no matter the topic. The highlight had to be when LaMotta, the consummate ham, made an off-color comment and, concerned that I might include it in the interview, started speaking to my tape recorder as if it was a person, yelling, 'I'm only joking!'"

Interview conducted May 1999

Q: What's a day in the life of Jake LaMotta like these days?

A: Well, I'm semi-retired. I get a lot of job offers, but I'm at the stage of my life where I only want to take certain jobs. I do





"My sons' [deaths] didn't hit me right away. I was in a state of shock. For months, I couldn't sleep, and I realized it was because of the way it bothered me. And even now, occasionally, I go without sleeping all night long."

Just after announcing his retirement, LaMotta relaxes with his family in this 1954 photo. Both of his sons, Jack (right next to Jake) and Joe (seated on floor), died last year, leaving LaMotta with only his four daughters. Also pictured are daughter Christi and the second of LaMotta's six wives, Vicki.

stand-up comedy, personal appearances. I do signing shows. I did three or four of those with Muhammad Ali last year. I go to a lot of places, like next week, I'm going to California with my attorney to promote a video game. While I'm there, I'm not sure, I might be doing an appearance, doing my comedy.

Q: How often do you do the comedy routine?

A: About once a month. And I do it different than any comedian has ever done things like that before, because I do it all with questions and answers. With the questions and answers, half the time they trigger off a joke in my head, and the audience, they think it's spontaneous because they're asking questions, but I've memorized a lot of stuff. Like, if you ask me something on Rocky [Graziano], I got five jokes on Rocky. Or you ask me something about my kids, I got jokes on my kids. It's association. It triggers me off. And it comes out good, I get a great hand. One time I did comedy up at the New York Athletic Club recently, and my girl was in the audience, and I introduced her. I said, "I'm married six times. That might be lucky seven." And I go on with a joke about that.

Q: And what do you do on a typical day when you're not working?

A: Well, last night I was here at the restaurant, and a piano player was playing, and I met some friends over here. You know, people think because you're a celebrity that everything is great, but a lot of famous celebrities, they're very lonely. They can't go here, they can't go there. Marilyn Monroe was very lonely. She could have had dates every night of the year, but people thought she was too big a star to ask out on a date. They were shy to ask her, or they were embarrassed, whatever, they thought they were not good enough. But these pretty girls, they're the easiest ones to go out with, because a lot of them are lonely.

Q: But it sounds like you think you have just the right level of fame.

A: You know, I'm more known today than I was when I was champion, due to the fact that the movie came out, and it made me a champ all over again. There's a group of people that never saw me fight, but saw the movie. I'm happy with my fame, and I'm happy with the way I live my life. I try to do the proper things because I have no alternative but to do the proper things. If you want to be healthy and happy, you have to do the proper things. You want to be healthy, eat the proper foods, do the exercise, the proper things. And you gotta be nice to people. If I'm not being nice, I'll get lousy vibes.

And I stay healthy with exercise. I get up, I shadow box 15, 20 minutes without stopping, at a fast pace. There's very few guys that can do that. And I go for a walk every morning, then I do my shopping; I got a nice routine. I like to cook, and I read the papers, I'm on the telephone, I read books, I watch TV. So I keep myself busy. But there's still a lot of times—well, not a lot of times, but some times—that I get lonely, too, you know. I'm always used to having a girl around me. I been married six times. Now, for the past few years, I've

Jake and Vicki remained friends long after their divorce.

been alone. Don't get me wrong. I like it. It's not bad, because sometimes women are a pain in the ass. And a lot of times men are a pain in the ass. I don't want to say one is better than the other. There's a lot of men that are creeps, and there's a lot of women that are creeps. But even though I was married six times, I had a great time with all my wives.

Q: And you said you had a girlfriend these days, right?

A: Yeah, I got one in Arizona. I don't see her that much, but I got one. Beautiful girl. I told her, she may be number seven. I doubt it, but maybe. Anything's possible. She's an attractive lady, but she's too old for me.

Q: How old is she?

A: She's in her 40s. I'm only joking. I still got almost 30 years on her, she's not too old for me.

Q: You mentioned the movie earlier. I know you've said in the past that the movie focused too much on the negative aspects of your life, and not enough—

A: Well, I did say that. But do you want a hit movie, or do you just want a movie that's gonna tell you the exact truth? You know, nothing's 100 percent. So you gotta compromise. First of all, I don't use profanity, very rarely I use profanity. But that's all there was during the picture. They had my brother using profanity, everybody used profanity. And I told the director, "I don't use profanity. Why do you have DeNiro saying cuss words and all that?" Then he put a piece in the movie where DeNiro, he tells his brother, my brother, he says, "Joe, why do have to curse all the time?" He put that in the movie because of what I told him.

Q: Do you wish looking back that you'd had a little more influence over the final product?

A: No. I'll refresh your memory. The movie was nominated for eight Academy Awards. And superstar Robert DeNiro won the Oscar for best actor. I would say the thing is about 95 percent correct. And that's more than any movie you ever saw. A lot of the stuff in there, they took this part, they put it in another spot just to make the movie flow better. But these things happened. A lot of that stuff you can't make up. Truth is stranger than fiction, right?

Q: You wrote a sequel to the book. Did that ever come close to being made into a movie?

A: A few people were interested in making a sequel. See, when they made the movie out of the first one, I was a very poor businessman. We made a deal with them, we got eight percent of the net. Never saw any money. What we should have got was four percent of the gross. Then, millions I would have seen. I know now, you don't want net, you want gross. So there were these guys who wanted to make the second movie, and I said, I want this, this, this, and this. And if I can't get it, forget about it. So I turned down a few people for the second movie. A few people were interested.

Q: Did DeNiro want to do it?

A: I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't think so.

Q: The past year for you, obviously, has been a very difficult one.

A: Last year was the worst year of my life. Over a period of seven months, I lost two sons. One by cancer, and one by the SwissAir crash. Two sons. I had six children, two boys and four girls, now I got four daughters. And they're a pain in the ass. Nah, I'm just kidding, they're all right. I only say that to be obnoxious. I don't know why I want to be obnoxious, but sometimes when you're a boxer, you get some good laughs. And I'm geared for comedy.

Q: Is that the toughest ordeal that anyone could go through, outliving your children?

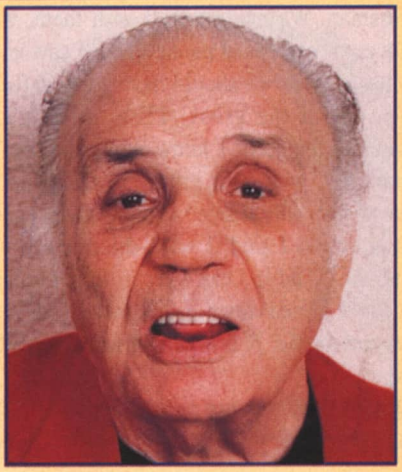
A: Well, it didn't hit me right away. I was in a state of shock. For months, I couldn't sleep, and I realized it was because of the way it bothered me. See it bothered me internally. And I couldn't sleep for a long time. And even now, occasionally, I go without sleeping all night long. Maybe it's because of the black coffee, or maybe it's because of my sons. But psychologically, I don't know. You react to a lot of things subconsciously, not knowing the reason why you're reacting like that.

Q: So you've managed externally to not let people see how upsetting this is for you.

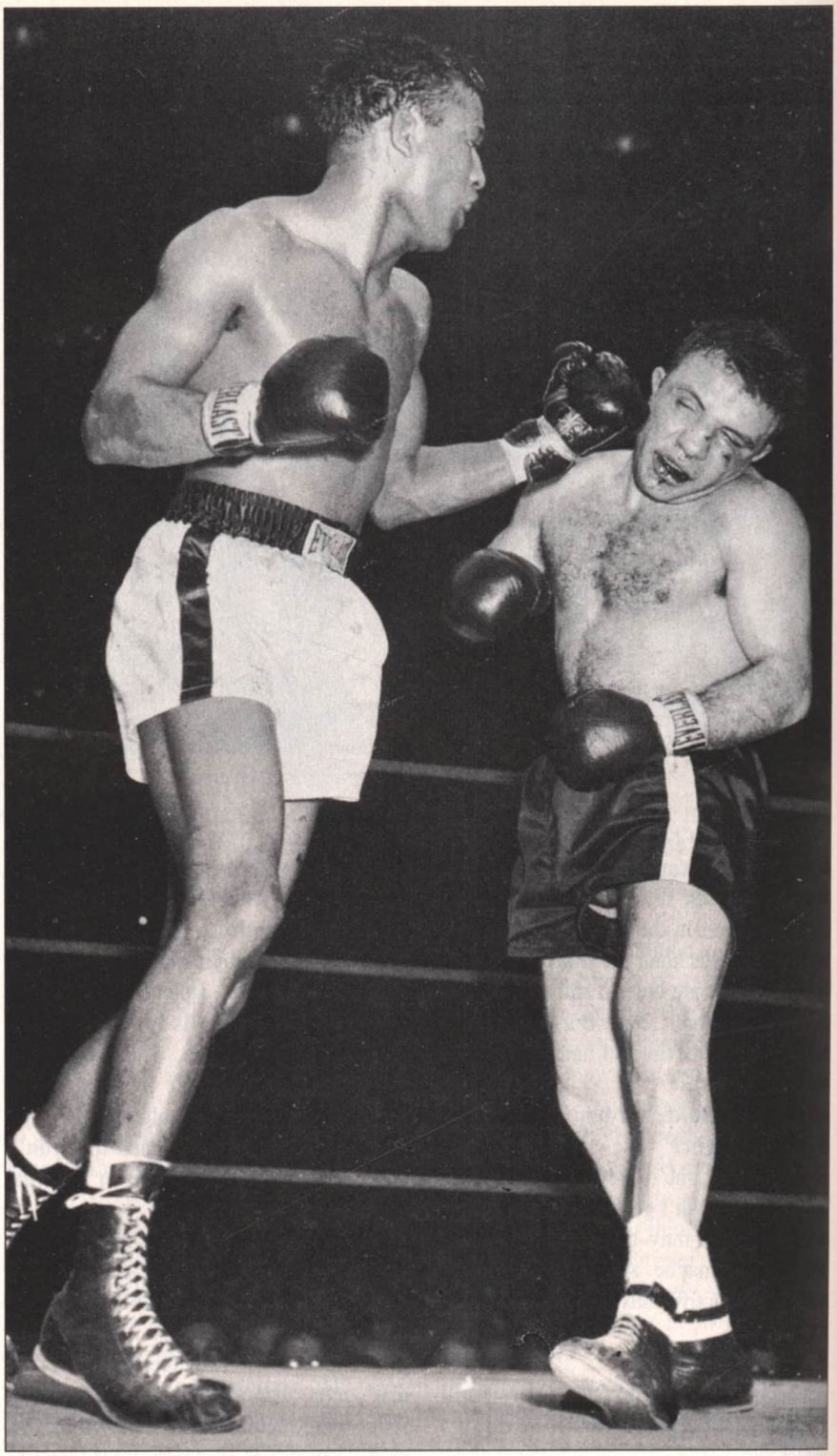
A: I try to be hard on the outside, but some stuff shows. I was stuttering a lot, and I couldn't come out with words. I'm thinking about it now, and I'm talking funny. Still today, you're asking me questions, and I'm stuttering a little bit.

Q: Your son Joe was the one who ran your tomato sauce company, right?

A: Yeah, and when he died, I took over the LaMotta's Tomatta Sauce. It's a terrific



"A stupid, uneducated guy like me, in the roughest business in the world, I accomplished something that very few guys can accomplish. I wouldn't throw a fight, except to get my shot at the title. If I had to do it all over again, I would have done the same thing."

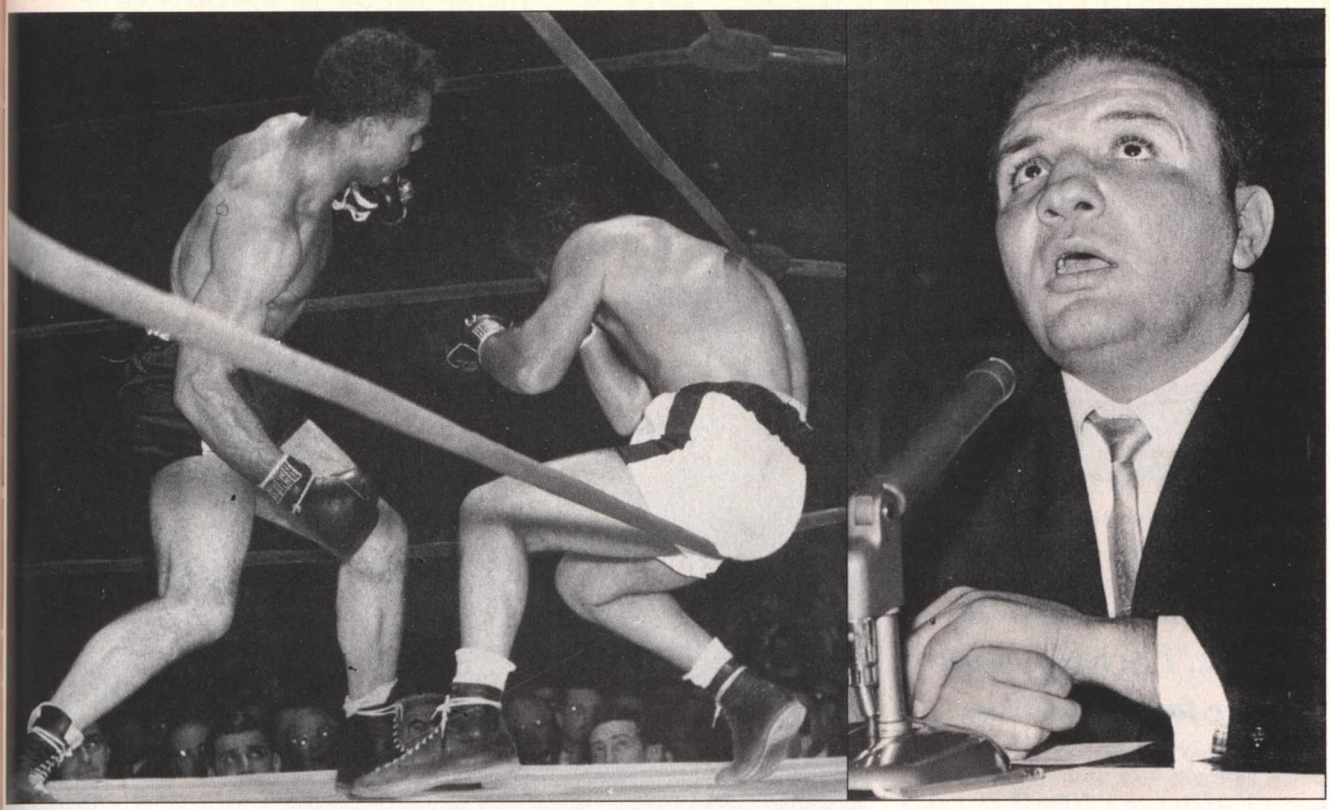


Although it probably didn't seem very funny at the time, LaMotta has managed to make the awful beating he took in his final fight with Sugar Ray Robinson the subject of many of his jokes. LaMotta surrendered the middleweight title when the fight was stopped in the 13th round.

sauce. See, I've been cooking for years and years. I learned from my mother, she learned from her mother, and so on. Now, I make a great sauce. But my son improvised and made it better. He was a good cook. And he managed me. My other son, he had managed me first. When he died, my son Joe, Tomato Sauce Joe, he started to manage me. Now they're both dead. Now he *(points to lawyer Joe Fell)* does things for me. He does things for me for no pay. If he asks for pay, I'll say, "Forget about it, I'll take care of myself."

Q: You managed to walk away from boxing in your early-30s, without making a bunch of ill-advised comebacks. What made it possible for you to stay away from the game?

A: Well, I would have loved to have kept fighting until ... as old as I am now, I would love to still be fighting. I love the game more than anything else, more than 99.9 percent of the other fighters do. That's all I did. I boxed all the time. In the gym, if you'd do maybe 50 rounds of boxing for a fight, I would do 500. That's how much I loved it. But I had trouble making weight. I lost over 5,000 pounds in my life. Four-thousand when I was fighting, and 1,000 since I quit. I'm still losing weight. Three days after the final Robinson fight, I put on 32 pounds. I made 160 for Robinson, I was 155 after the fight, and



LaMotta's 1947 fight with Billy Fox (left) marked the first stoppage loss of "The Bronx Bull's" career. He later testified (right) that he threw the fight in order to get the shot at the middleweight crown that had eluded him his entire career.

three days later I was 187. My body was like a sponge. It absorbed liquids. Then, I said, well, I have to fight as a light heavyweight. But it was hard to make 175. Once I got to the point where I couldn't make 175, I said, "I can't be fighting heavyweights." Although I fought a light heavyweight that knocked out a lot of heavyweights. You remember Bob Satterfield? He knocked out a lot of big heavyweights. And I knocked him out. Remember, I fought Sugar Ray Robinson twice in three weeks. That's another impossible thing. Another time, I beat four undefeated guys in six weeks, and Robinson was one of them. Four undefeated guys in six weeks! Where do you see that today? You don't see that today.

Q: Why do you think that is, that back in your day you could fight so much more frequently?

A: Because you stay in shape. After you fight, you're still in shape. These other guys, they fight once, then they gotta get all in shape again. You were always in shape. And besides, there's the money. It's just so much better today. In 15 years of fighting and 106 fights, I made less than a million dollars. And my biggest amount of money I made was losing my title to Sugar Ray Robinson, that was $75,000. That was the biggest payday. Every time I fought Robinson, I would get $30,000 or $35,000. Today, I would fight Robinson and get $25-million! There's no comparison. They say money was great in those days, you could get a lot more for your money in those days, but the paydays, relatively, still weren't what they are now.

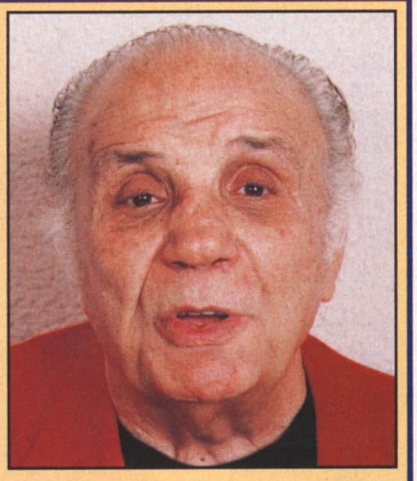
Q: You were a guy who was renowned for his ability to take punishment and come back to win, but now a lot of referees stop fights before the fighters get that opportunity. Do you think fights are being stopped too soon?

A: Yeah, they stop the fights too quickly. They say they make a fighter live to fight another day. But when I fought, I was merciful. If a guy can't fight, I'd finish him off right away, don't let him suffer. That sounds crude, right? But sometimes you're better off hurting somebody right away instead of making him suffer. What would you rather do, suffer for a long time, or get knocked out with one punch? Which is worse? They're both bad, but …

Q: Would today's referees have deprived you of some victories with their quick stoppages?

A: Today, if I were fighting, I would have to change my style. When I fought, a lot of times I would make believe I was hurt. I did that one time in a great, great fight with Laurent Dauthuille. It was my second title defense. I was losing the fight, and they told me that I can't win the fight unless I knock him out. So toward the end of the round, the last round, I made believe I was hurt, and then that drew him in so I could make one last barrage. It was unbelievable. It was one of the greatest fights anyone had ever seen. When I thought it was near the end of the fight, about 30 seconds left, I threw all the punches I could throw with all the power I had left. And then I finally caught him with a left hook on the chin, and he fell down, fell right through the ropes, and they counted 10. There was 13 seconds left. I was very, very lucky to win that fight and retain my title. That was one of my greatest wins of all-time, besides winning the title from Marcel Cerdan, a great, great champion, probably the greatest champion to ever come out of Europe. But in all those title fights, I was weak from making the weight! These days, I would have fought as a super middleweight.

Q: Do you think there are too many divisions today, or do you think that's



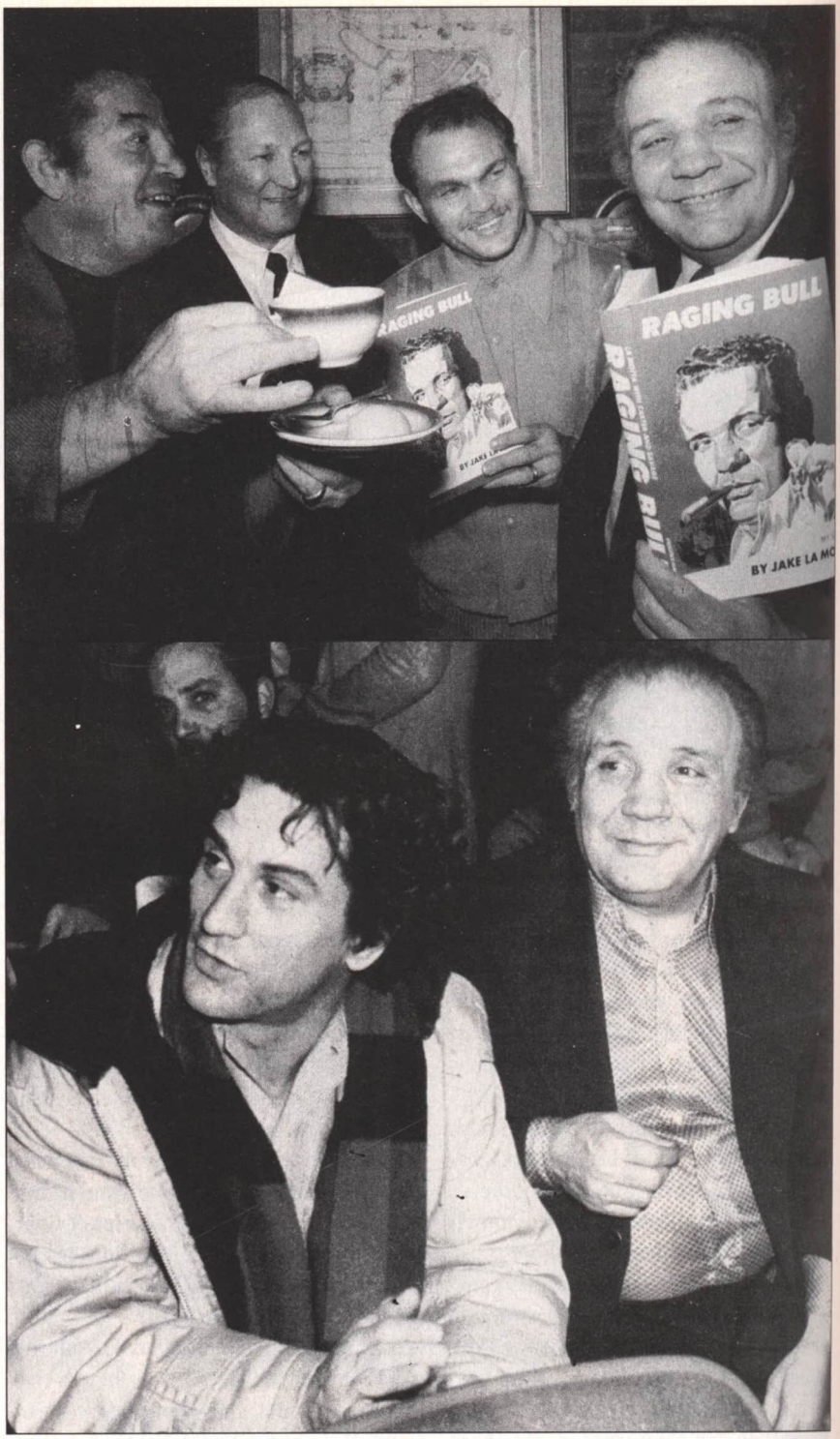
"There's a group of people that never saw me fight, but saw the movie. I'm happy with my fame, and I'm happy with the way I live my life."

good for the sport to have all these weight classes?

A: I don't know if it's good. It doesn't matter the number of weight classes, there isn't one world champion. In my day, there was eight world's champions. It was before your time, but that's the way it was. Today, there's nobody who's really a world champion, you just have all these organizations. Like the Lennox Lewis fight, obviously he won the fight. They should put the three organizations together, and just have one world champion.

Q: Do you think the Lewis-Holyfield fight was just a case of bad judging, or—

A: There was no fix. But you could do a fix without it being a fix. If I was a promoter, and I get you a good job as a judge, and I get you a trip to America, and pay all your expenses and all that, in your mind, you want to do what's good for me. If I'm the judge, and I vote against his guy, maybe next time he won't hire me. If it's a close fight, you want to favor the promoter, which is only natural. And you do it subconsciously. You know what I'm talking about? I'm not explaining it right, but you know what I'm talking about.



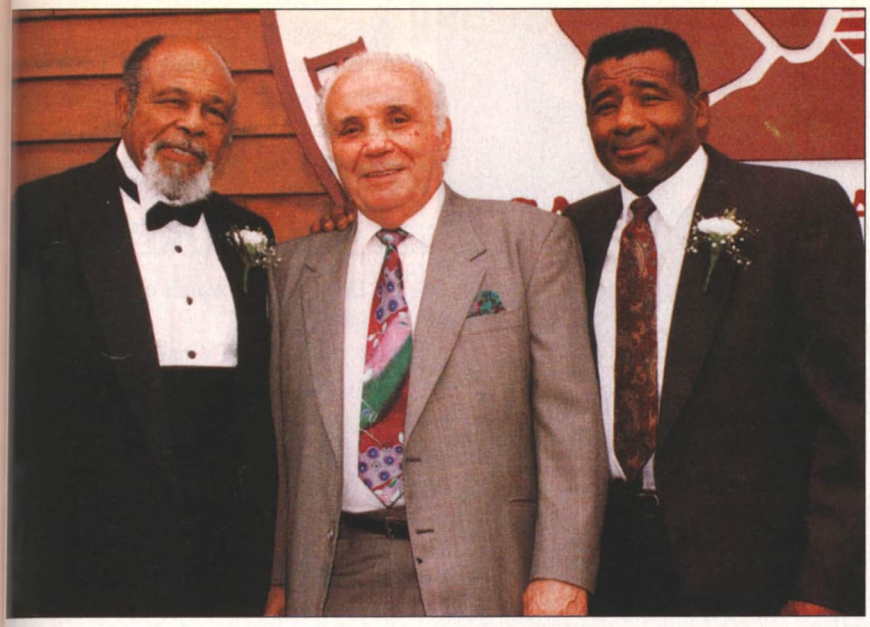
Rocky Graziano, Billy Graham, and Carlos Ortiz help Jake celebrate the release of his autobiography in 1970 (top). Ten years later, Martin Scorcese would direct the film adaptation, starring Robert DiNiro (pictured with Jake at a New York fight, above).

Q: Do you think Holyfield can come back and win the rematch?

A: I think Holyfield's been washed-up for the past five years. Sure, he'll beat Tyson all the time. No matter how bad Holyfield is, he'll beat Tyson all the time. He's not afraid of him. I thought Tyson, at one time, was gonna be the greatest heavyweight champion of all-time. And he disappointed me. He was a bigger and stronger Marciano. The two greatest champions of all-time were Joe Louis and Marciano.

Q: You don't put Ali in that same class?

A: Close, but not quite. I used to say three, I used to say Ali, too. But after thinking about it, Frazier beat him, and Frazier is like



LaMotta poses with the fellow Hall of Famers Archie Moore and Floyd Patterson at the 1996 induction ceremonies in Canastota, New York.

Marciano, but not as good. Marciano would have beaten Frazier. And Frazier beat Ali, so Marciano would have beaten Ali. Think about that. Marciano and Frazier, they had the same kind of style, they were both strong, they both punched hard, but I think Marciano could take it better than Frazier. Of course, Ali was not a real hard puncher, and he had Frazier all banged up. And Foreman knocked Frazier out easy, knocked him down I think six times.

Q: You fought in an era packed with great middleweights and welterweights. How do you think today's guys in those same classes would have stacked up against you and your peers?

A: Now, I might be prejudiced and all that, but they're just not as tough anymore, or they at least don't prove themselves as much anymore. A lot of these guys in my day all had over 100 fights. Archie Moore had over 200 fights. Willie Pep had over 240 fights. Sugar Ray Robinson had over 200 fights. I had 106, but I still wanted to keep on fighting, I was capable of doing it. Nobody hurt me, I never got hurt in the ring.

Q: Even in the sixth fight with Robinson?

A: Nah, he stunned me, I guess. I was exhausted with Robinson. From making weight, I couldn't lift up my arms. I got a joke, see, that triggers off a joke. I fought Sugar Ray in 1951 on St. Valentine's Day. They called it the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The referee stopped the fight in the 13th round when I was still on my feet with Robinson pounding me up against the ropes. If the referee had let up another 30 seconds, Robinson would have collapsed from hitting me! See what I mean? I go right into a joke from any subject. I got more. I fought Sugar Ray so many times, it's a wonder I don't have diabetes. I remember one night he broke my ribs, then he broke my jaw, but luckily, as you can see, he never touched my nose. See, I got my whole routine going. And they laugh like crazy because they think it's spontaneous. Just one word can trigger it all off in my head. I memorized 10,000 words in a play, a play that I did called *Born Yesterday*. I did a performance called *An Evening With Jake LaMotta*, and I did nine different scenes from different plays, nine different characterizations, nine different emotions. And even now, I'm quoting that stuff I used to do years ago. I did *On The Waterfront. (LaMotta flawlessly performs the famous "I coulda' been a contender" scene.)* That grabbed you, right? And I'm just a punch-drunk fighter. I remember that from when I used to perform it in 1961, '62.

Q: One of today's top stars, Oscar De La Hoya, is a polar opposite of you in many ways, in his style, his image. What's your opinion of De La Hoya?

A: Oscar De La Hoya is probably one of the best guys around today. Roy Jones, he's pretty good, too. But De La Hoya, here's a guy, when he was lighter, he was a better fighter. Now he's getting heavy, it happens to a lot of guys, Duran and other guys, when they get heavy, they lose something, they're not as big a puncher as they were. And if you get nailed, a lot of these guys can't take it like I could. Nobody ever hurt me. God blessed me with a hard head.

Q: That was your best weapon.

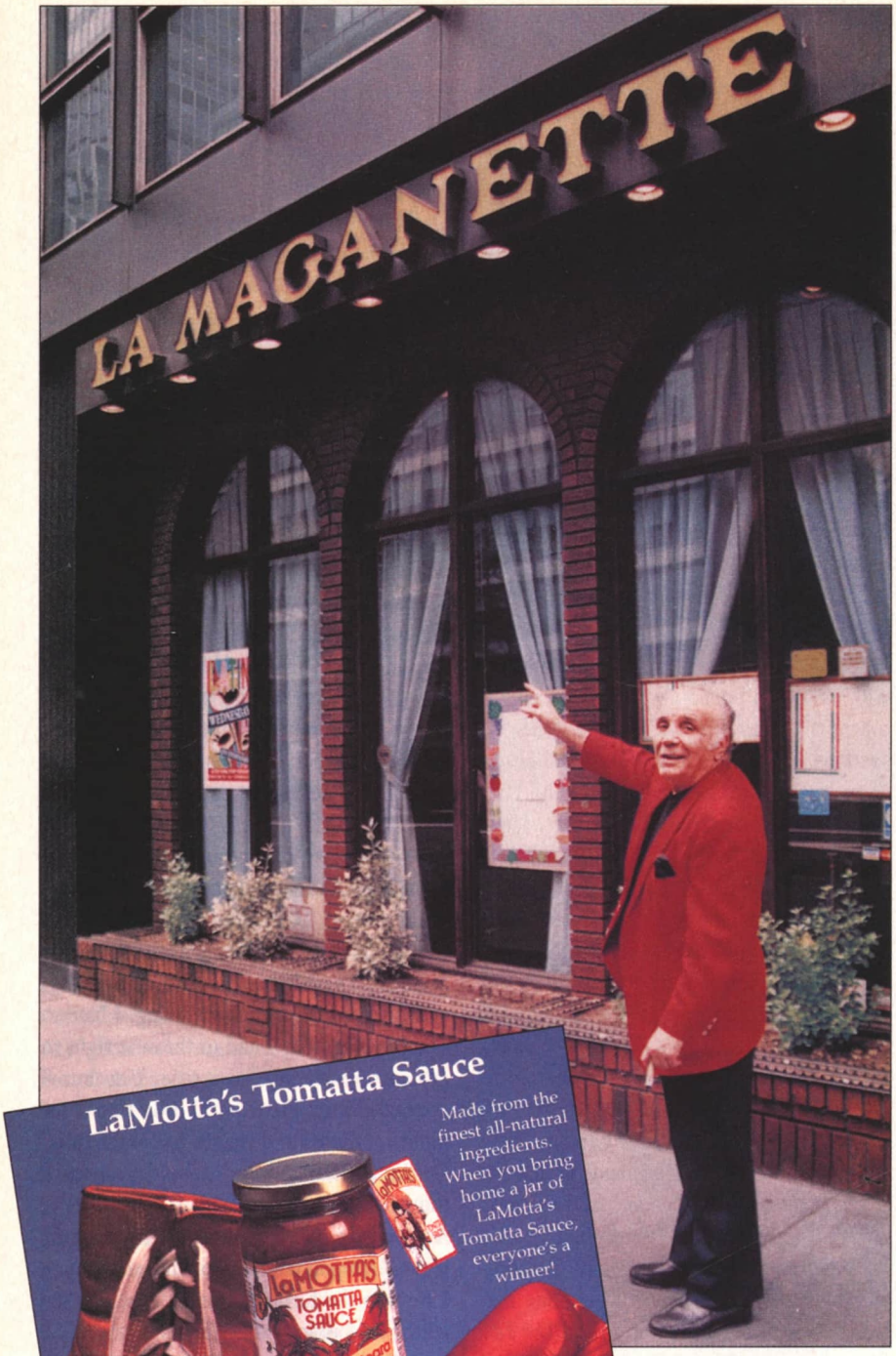
A: Yeah. I should have hit 'em with my head. You know, they voted me a couple years ago, *Ring* magazine gave me the toughest chin of all-time. So I guess that makes me the toughest fighter of all-time.

Q: After you distinguished yourself by beating Robinson, you had to wait six more years to get a title shot, and nowadays guys get title shots in their 12th fight, 15th fight. Does that bother you?

A: I defied the Mafia. How I'm alive today, I'll never know. But I was too stupid to be scared. They wanted to control me, and I managed myself. And I was the worst manager in the world because I fought everybody. I didn't care who it was. I fought more black men than any white fighter probably who ever lived. Me and Joey Maxim, I think I fought more than him, but Joey Maxim fought a lot of black guys, too. And so did Joey Giardello. But eight out of 10 fighters I fought were black. I didn't discriminate against nobody. They helped me make a living, and I helped them make a living. I hate to bring this up, but I had to throw a fight to get an opportunity for a title. You know about the Billy Fox fight. I didn't do it for money, I did it for a chance to get the title.

Q: And looking back, would you have done it the same way?

A: You know something? The senator from Michigan who was on the panel when I went to the Kefauver Committee investigation on boxing, after it was all over, he says, "Jake, if I was you, I wouldn't know what to do either." I defied the mob. And then when I finally did get a shot to fight for the title, they double-crossed me, and I still had to pay $20,000 to get the fight. I got $18,000 for the fight, so I lost $2,000. But I bet $10,000 on myself at 8-to-5, so I got $16,000. But I did what I set out to do. Can you imagine that? A stupid, uneducated guy like me, in the roughest business in the world, I accomplished something that very few guys can accomplish. I wouldn't throw a fight, except to get my shot at the title. And off the record—no, on the record, I don't care—if I had to do it all



One of LaMotta's favorite hangouts is La Maganette in New York City. As great an Italian restaurant as that is, they don't serve LaMotta's Tomatta Sauce!

over again, I would have done the same thing. Time was running out, I was getting older, I had a beautiful wife and three children. You know, Rocky made that movie *Somebody Up There Likes Me*. I should have had that title. Instead, I was thinking of writing a book also called *Nobody Down Here Wants Me*.

Q: Do you ever watch old films of your fights?

A: I see 'em on TV once in a while, they always have it on TV. And I'll look at it a little bit if it's on, but I never put it on myself.

Q: Would you rather be remembered for being entertaining or for being great?

A: Both. I gave them it all for their money. They loved to see me. I stood there toe-to-toe, never backed up. I don't know how to back up.

Q: What do you consider your greatest achievement inside the ring, and your greatest achievement outside the ring?

A: That's a good question. Well, inside the ring, I don't have just one. I have a few. I was the first man to beat Sugar Ray Robinson. That was a great accomplishment. I won the title from Marcel Cerdan. That's another great accomplishment. I defended my title against Laurent Dauthuille and I knocked him out with 13 seconds left.

Outside the ring, I have six children. I had six, now I got four. Having children was a great accomplishment. Oh, here's a great accomplishment: accomplishing something that was the opposite of what I really accomplished—show business. Making 17 movies, doing stand-up comedy, a lot of TV work. I went up from the sublime to the ridiculous. Is that the right way to say it? I went from one extreme to the next. From making a living hurting people, to making a living making people laugh. From one extreme to the next.

LaMOTTA UPDATE

Not much has changed for LaMotta since this interview was first published. He's no longer peddling spaghetti sauce, but still makes public appearances, doing stand-up comedy ("I only take the cream of the crop these days"). The "Raging Bull" is now 80 years old, but says he's feel "terrific."

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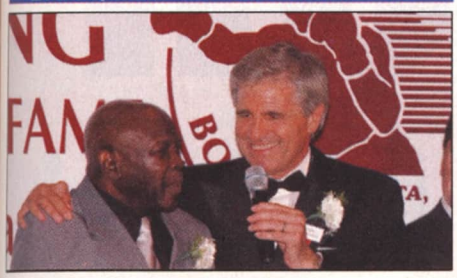

Reunion . . . Emile Griffith and Nino Benvenuti recall three memorable championship fights.

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Everlasting . . . Fist cast by Jeff Fenech.

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HECTOR CAMACHO

Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Casino Resort.

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Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

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GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

VIP COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP reception while Angelo Dundee receives red carpet welcome.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Christy Martin laces up her gloves and Bernard Hopkins hits the speed bag.

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Reminiscing. . . Alexis Arguello (L) reunites with Ruben Olivares (R).

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HECTOR CAMACHO

"Nobody Understands Me"

HECTOR CAMACHO IS mellowing. Whether it's old age (24), the pounding he received in barely escaping with a split decision over Edwin Rosario in June, or the constant influence of his girlfriend, Keesha Colon, and seven-year-old son, Hector Jr., the "Macho Man's" exterior is softening. Perhaps just as surprising, he's acknowledging the change.

"Two years ago, if someone said to me, 'You lost to Rosario,' I would kick their ass," he says. "Now, I just say, 'That's your opinion.' I'm different than I used to be."

For one heartbeat-skipping night in June, he became different in the ring as well. Rosario nearly took Camacho's WBC lightweight title as the champion fought an overly cautious battle and never unleashed the skills he had displayed so brilliantly while capturing the crown from Jose Luis Ramirez last August. The close call pointed out to many long-time followers of Camacho's career just how crucial of a stage he has reached. Though an HBO attraction and one of the sport's most talented athletes—and one of it most charismatic stars—we still don't know if he is a long-term proposition. He's just too unpredictable.

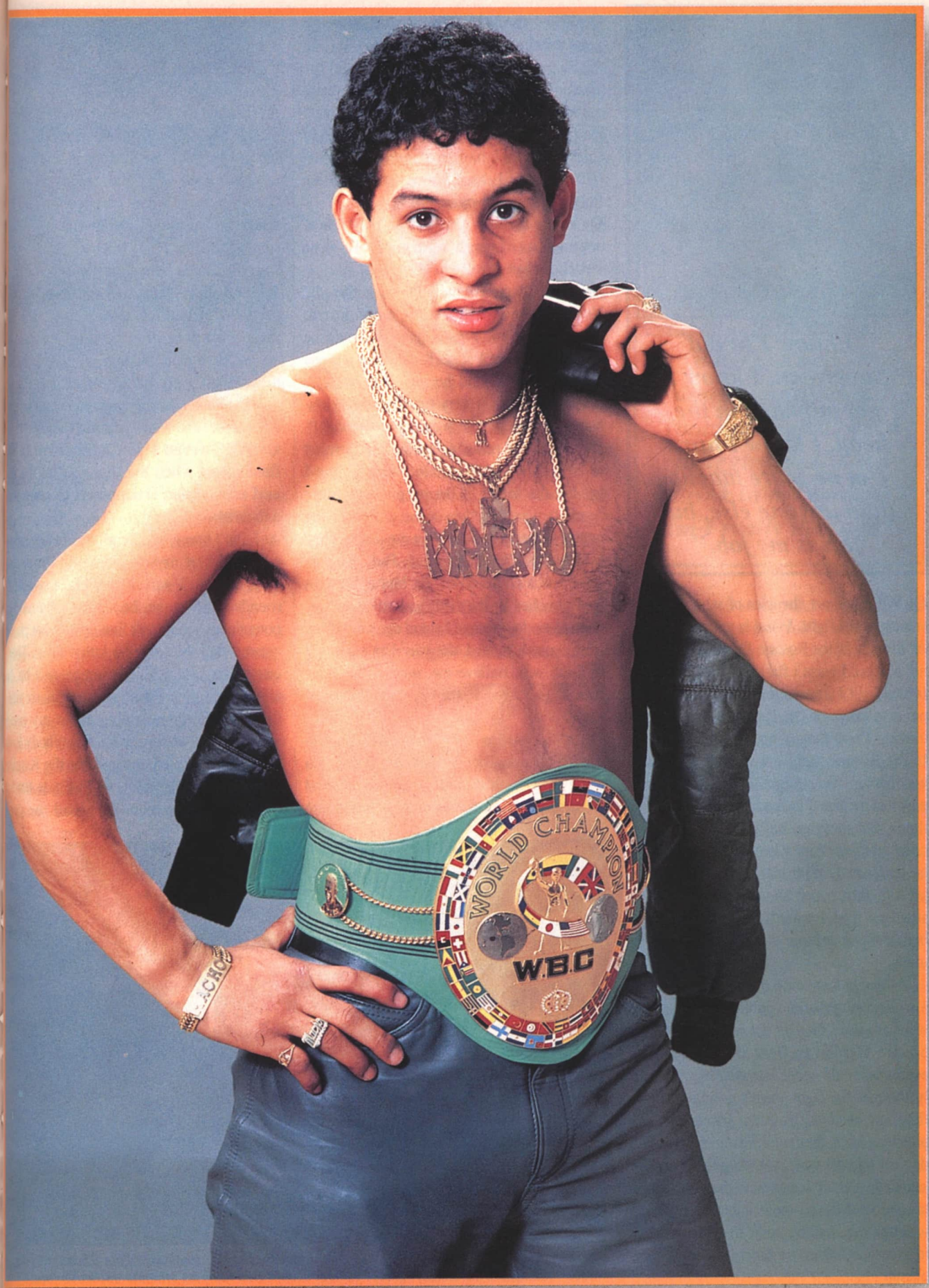
One day after he had celebrated The Fourth of July with his son in Disney World, Camacho returned to his Clewiston, Florida, fight camp and spoke by phone with Jeff Ryan. In between hollering "Hector, put down that phone!" each time the mini-Macho Man picked up the extension, Camacho discussed several topics pertaining to his constantly turbulent career, including the Rosario fight, his financial problems, and his uncertain future. It was a different Camacho from the cocky, arrogant street punk who has raged out of control in so many other interviews. This Camacho, while no less controversial and candid, showed a side of him rarely revealed before. He showed a need to be accepted.

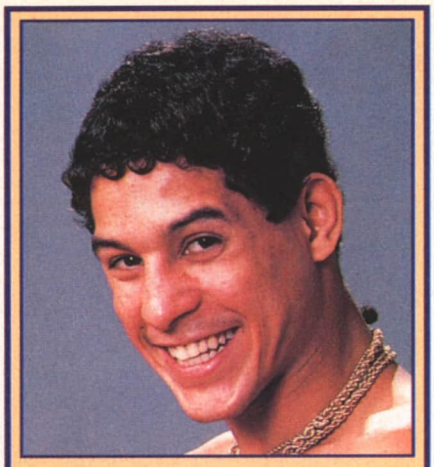
For years Camacho has forced himself on people, but now he is asking to be welcomed into their hearts with open arms. He's trying to switch his image, he says, from sharp, aggressive Macho Man to nice guy. But he is struggling with the realization that an image isn't something that can be changed as easily as the color of one of his glittery robes. Years ago, Camacho created his image and backed himself into a corner with it. And as he should know from his moments in the ring, the corner is one place from which there is often no escape.

Interview conducted July 1986

Q: Your macho image took a real beating recently in your fight with Edwin Rosario. This was the first time that we ever saw you talking to the press with a cut eyelid, and a swollen nose, and with the outcome of one of your fights being disputed. Most writers, including those here, thought that you had indeed lost. Now that you've had some time to reflect on the fight, give us your impressions.

A: If you think I lost, fine, that's your opinion. In my book, I won. As far as the decision goes, it was never in my mind that I lost the fight. I thought he won two rounds. I landed three punches to his one. That's what really made it clear in my head that I won. It worried me a little when they called the first card for him. I pushed up my eyebrows. You know, people never saw me in a hard fight like that, but this is boxing. This is the way that boxing is supposed to be. But me, Macho Man, Macho Camacho, the one who proved that he could take a punch, the one who got the nose pains, is telling you that *this* is not the way to come out.


MACHO
WORLD CHAMPION
W.B.C



"I know I'm not Superman. I know I got punched in the head. I know I hurt. I'm no more macho than anyone else, but this is my job."

Q: We have our theories of what you did wrong in the fight. What is your theory?

A: I fought in the Rosario fight like a Hector, not Macho. I wasn't flashy or tricky or alive. In the fight I never moved my head. I was never cocky. In the Ramirez fight I was movin,' I was shakin' up, down, body, head. In the Rosario fight I was more straight. I was backin' up straight. I had sting to my punches because I backed him up a couple of times, but the guy really got off the most crisp punches. And when he was punching, he dominated. With me, I had to trick him, jab him, then punch him. On the inside I was stronger, but I wasn't able to maneuver because the referee stayed on my ass so much.

I thought that being that I've been out for a while, being that the public gets a kick out of what I do, I thought if I came to Madison Square Garden to fight Edwin Rosario, everyone would appreciate that. I really, really thought the fight wasn't gonna go more than six or seven rounds. I know he's a puncher, but I don't get hit much. But that day my mental state was no good. I wasn't satisfied with the scene, with the idea of running around for all these interviews while I was training, waking up at five in the morning for *Good Morning America*. I ain't complainin', but …

Q: What thoughts were going through your mind when you were hurt?

A: Bing, the right hand hit me again in the goddamned 11th round. That's when I really got mad. I said, "F___, he keeps hitting me." He just constantly hits me. A lot of people told me that I had my hands too low. *(Disgustedly)* I don't know. I thought this fight was gonna be easier.

Q: When Rosario hurt you in the fifth, it seemed as though many of the fans switched their loyalty to him.

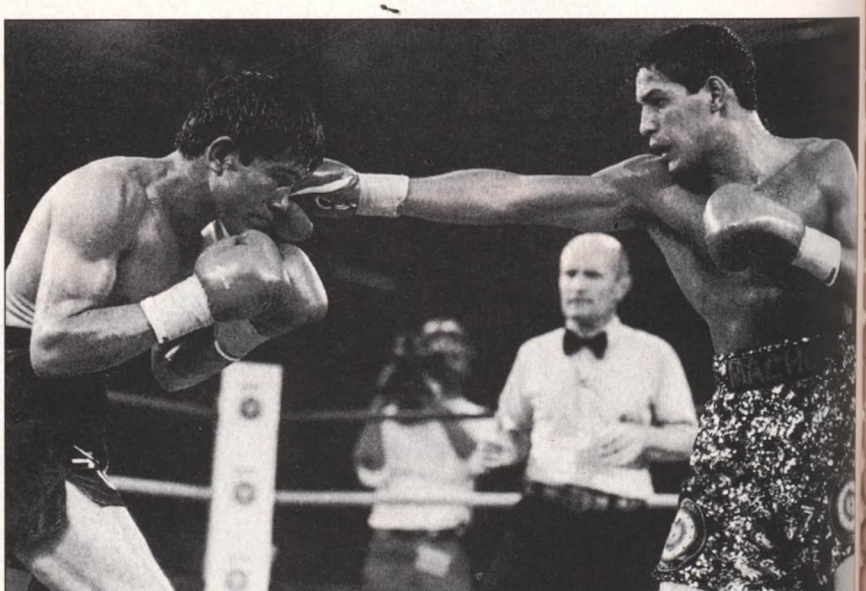
A: Hey, Rosario got more applause than the New York kid—as they call me in Puerto Rico, "The New York Rican." I should be considered more Puerto Rican than anyone else from the Island because I'm the guy people point out. Every time Rosario clobbered me, the people would go *"Ooooch!"* Like when the matador has the bull coming at him, *"Oooooh! Oooooh."* Every time I got hit, the sound of the people was in my head. It was like they were counting the punches that were gonna put me down. They said I couldn't take a punch. Bull. Rosario can break a house down. He hit me with his best punches in the fifth and still had two minutes to do it to me. I stood up, came back fresh, boxed, moved, the way I'm supposed to do to win. Believe me, under all the circumstances, I fought the best I could on that night.

Q: When you spoke to Larry Merchant in the ring immediately after the fight, you were very humble and gracious toward Rosario. Then, a few moments later, you stormed into the postfight press conference shouting and screaming and chastizing the writers. Why the sudden change in mood?

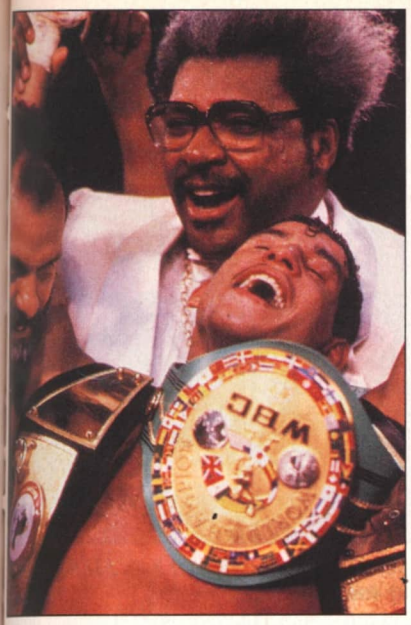
A: After the fight I was pretty humble, I was pretty satisfied with the decision. I thought the judges were fair, there was no prejudice or anything. I went and expressed myself fine. But then, when I went to talk to the reporters, Rosario is already there and he's starting to sound like Michael Spinks when Larry Holmes beat him the second time. "Oh, he didn't hurt me, he never—*aaah, aaah.*" I'm looking at him like, *Hey, the fight's over, brother, what are you mad about?* Be a man, motherf___er. I'm a man to say, hey, I got hit with punches. I don't fool the public. When I got there and he said he beat me, that really pumped me.

Q: Why weren't you aggressive in the final round when the title was on the line and a champion is supposed to close with a flourish?

A: I don't know, and I can't make any excuses or I'll hurt myself mentally. I'm telling you, he didn't win more than a couple of rounds. How come, because I have all this potential, when I don't live up to what people expect, they bury me? I know why. That's cause I have that Macho image, that ha, ha, all-around s___. When people criticize me, I think they're complaining about my image instead of my boxing skills. Everybody loves to criticize. For example, after the Ramirez fight—I was so perfect, it wasn't as hard as they said it was gonna be—all the press



Camacho fought a near-perfect fight in taking the WBC crown from Jose Luis Ramirez in August 1985. "Camacho's the fastest fighter I've ever seen," said Ramirez after the decission loss.



After hearing himself proclaimed lightweight king, Camacho exults in victory. The other king is pretty happy too.

talked about is me saying "nigger." People are constantly trying to criticize my lifestyle, the way I dress, what I do. They don't talk about the $12,000 I invest every year in the United Negro Fund and the Jerry Lewis Fund, and the Statue of Liberty. It's for tax purposes, but it's something good I'm doing, too. I'm giving back to those who need. How can I convince people that I'm good? That I'm not the crazy kid at all. I don't know how to please them anymore. Nobody understands, I got to be myself.

Q: What does being yourself mean?

A: I want to build my own way. Let me have fun, leave me alone. Let me live my life the way I want to. Someday I won't be able to enjoy this. Nobody understands, boxing is the *only* place where I run around and say, "Hey, I'm better than you." After fights, I'm looking for my peace of mind like everyone else would. I'm a family man taking care of my mother and father and brother and sister. I got my son. I mean, what the hell am I doing wrong? Am I robbing banks? Am I drugging out? Do I drink in my corner? Am I really that bad?

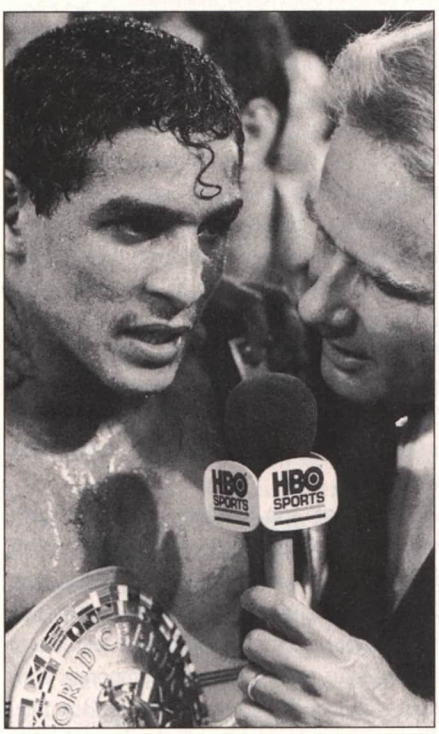
I have no desire being around the streets. I'm not a bag guy. I'm not nothing like they're playing me—"The kid is no good, the kid is hooked on drugs. He was expelled, thrown out of school." I know I did wrong, but that was before. I don't know what people expect from me. Every day I try to better myself, but nobody understands me. They *misunderstand* me. Yesterday I was looking at Mickey Mouse and Mighty Mouse, whatever her name is [at Disney World]. "Minnie Mouse," my son is tellin' me *(laughs)*. That's the kind of guy I am. *I ain't doing nothing wrong*. The big problem I have at the moment is that I'm having some family wars with my mother. I could have lost that [Rosario] fight because of her.

Q: How could she have cost you the fight?

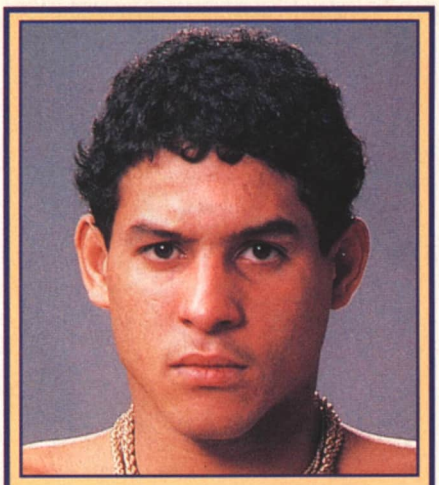
A: She gave me attitude in the dressing room before the fight. For example, my father forgot the grease to put on my face before the fight and stuff. So I say, "Yo, man, you want *me* to go get it? I'm paying you, motherf___er, go and get it!" My mother gives me a mean look, a stare. She gives me a look like, "Get rid of that attitude." It intimidates me. "But, Mom, I'm gettin' ready for a fight. I'm supposed to be mean." It was all f___ed up, man. That's why it's no good to have family in the camp. But it gave me a new formula to work off. Now I know I can't do things like that no more.

Q: Let's get back to your complaint that people view you as a bad guy. Why do you think that is?

A: I guess because of the Macho image. I'm trying to grow out of that image, just like Mr. T would like to grow out of the image of



After winning the 135-pound title, Camacho would ruffle more than a few feathers with his post-fight response to Larry Merchant's question of who he would fight next: "All you niggers, c'mon with it!" the "Macho Man" shouted into the HBO microphone.



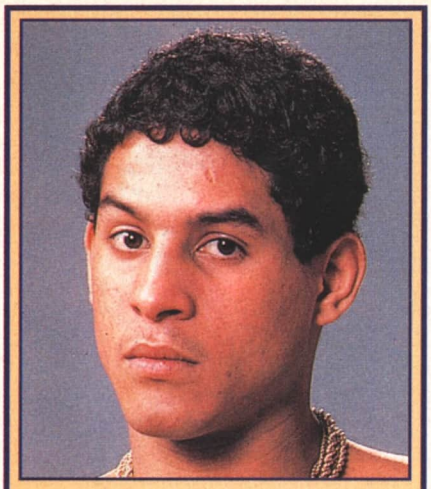
"What the hell am I doing wrong? Am I robbing banks? Am I drugging out? Do I drink in my corner? Am I really that bad?"

wearing all that jewelry and dressing the way he does. It's hard to really show another image to the public after they're used to the old one.

Q: How can you complain about the Macho Man image when you're the one who tried so hard to create it?

A: All I'm saying is that I ain't no punk-rock kind of guy. I'm just a kid with a lot of God-given talent and energy. I'm a sweetheart. What I did was learn how to get the public attention and then use it. I've been in the game long enough to learn how to maneuver the Macho image in my favor. Macho is that charismatic character in me, but it's not me. It's like wrestling. You see wrestling? Lately, I've been getting a kick out of it. My son is into it. He knows all the characters. They act real crazy on TV and in real life they're a bunch of pussycats. I know because I met them. On TV, it's all macho s___.

Look at Stallone. He makes the movies, *Cobra, Rambo, Rocky*. He's not in real life like he is in the movie. That's the way it is. I know I'm not Superman. I know I got punched in the head. I know I hurt. I'm no more macho than anyone else, but this is my job. This is what's promoting me. I have to act macho, I'm a nice guy. I am. I don't treat people nasty like Larry [Holmes] used to do. That's why people don't feel sorry that he



"I fought in the Rosario fight like a Hector, not Macho. I wasn't flashy or tricky or alive. I never moved my head. I was never cocky."

The ladies are always after "that macho body." But Camacho insists that he's not interested. "I don't need to run around with girls. I got my lady and I love her."

lost. He was rough with people. I'm not. I'm kind. I talk. If anyone has any negative attitude to give me, I play on it. You know, I let them talk their s___ to me. No one can bulls___ me, I'm the bulls___er.

Q: Why did you pose for *Playgirl* magazine. Was that in keeping with the image?

A: I thought it could open doors. The posing brought me a lot of money and a lot of female fans. Like Rambo, girls go for that macho body. And I'm a real life Macho man, the kid of the '80s. I've got super female fans. They love every part of me. Ladies are always there, I could throw myself to the animals and they'd love it. But I don't need to run around with girls. I got my lady and I love her.

Q: You haven't fought very often in the last two years, and there have been rumors that one of the reasons is because you overestimated your value and overpriced yourself. Your response.

A: No, I ask for crazy money sometimes, but I know what I can get and what I can't get. I know I ain't gettin' no money for Harold Brazier like I did for Rosario. I gotta stay busy so I can work may way up to the crazy money with [Livingstone] Bramble. I'll fight Brazier and Boza-Edwards and then let Bramble and Rosario fight, and I'll fight the winner of that. Bramble, he can get me the crazy money.

Q: Camacho vs. Bramble seems to be a good old-fashioned grudge match. In a "KO Interview" of a few months ago, he made quite a few derogatory comments about you.

A: Well, fine. I'm not gonna make the same mistake with Bramble that I made with Rosario. I'm not gonna try and intimidate him. I'm not gonna badmouth him. I just bring myself down to their league and I'm in a class by myself. I signed a temporary contract with Don King for a fight with Bramble. The reason I want to fight Bramble is because the public is anxious for it. Regardless of what he says, he's not a better fighter than me. If you ask me if I'm better looking than Bramble, yes! Do I dress better than Bramble? yes! Am I known more than him? Yes! Bramble thought I lost the fight to Rosario. Fine. Believe what you want. Can Bramble kick my butt? Can he shut my mouth? Everybody has an opinion 'bout that. That's why I want this fight.

Bramble is a good friend of my friend Raymond. He called Raymond one day and told him to tell me to stop being a girl, to come on and fight. I don't play that s___. I saw Bramble in Vegas when Hearns fought Hagler. We took a picture together and I told him, "I'm stealing the show with the way I'm dressed, brother. You know who I am and you know you don't want to fight me. If you really wanna fight, we'll make mucho money. Or we can be friends, or we can go into the parking lot now." He smiled, what else could he say? Later for Bramble. Who'd he beat? Mancini? Let him beat Jimmy Paul

"How can I convince people that I'm good?" asked Camacho, who points out that he donated $12,000 to the United Negro College Fund.

Camacho says he never officially split with Jimmy Montoya (pictured holding towel). He was, however, angry over the fact that Montoya agreed to be in Edwin Rosario's corner.

r Rosario, then our fight would be bigger.

Q: What are your goals right now?

A: I'm on a mission to dominate the lightweights the way I dominated the junior lightweights, then move on as a junior welterweight.

Q: It seems that every time the fans watch one of your fights, they see a profile piece explaining how you have finally gotten your career on track. Before the Ramirez bout, we were told about the problems you had with Billy Giles and how Jimmy Montoya had you straightened out. Now we see that Montoya is gone and Marty Cohen is handling your affairs. How can you be sure that nothing is going to go wrong this time?

A: I *can't* be sure. But if I stay in good condition and stay right mentally, think boxing 100 percent, be myself, I'll make it work. People just can keep interfering and making things complicated for me. Marty has been great for me. I don't know if this Rosario fight was a message from God, him trying to show me that this was something else that I could overcome, but I'm ready now. I don't have to do any more talking about what I'm gonna do. I think I've established that. I'm a pro for six years, a two-time champion, and I'm 30-0. Maybe I can be the one to break Rocky Marciano's record *(laughs)*.

Q: What caused your split with Jimmy Montoya?

A: We never did break up. I just didn't hire him for that fight. I would work with him again, but now my fight is coming and I don't have anyone to train me. Jimmy made me mad when he was in Rosario's corner.

Camacho dragged himself to the post-fight press conference, but he was feeling every bit the beaten man. "Daddy, you're lucky to be alive," seven-year-old Hector Jr. told him.

Rosario gave the Macho Man all he could handle in their title fight in June '86. The crowd, which cheered Camacho's entrance, booed the announcement of his split-decision victory.

What did Rosario pay him, a hundred or two hundred? I know it wasn't more than that. I'm by myself now. Right now I want a trainer, but who's a trainer right now that will train me without just looking at the dollar signs? Nobody said it was gonna be easy.

Q: Marty Cohen said that you made $4-million in your career, but only have $200,000 and a few small investments to show for it. Where did all the money go?

A: Mostly the government, being that I'm 24 years old and self-dependent and I had no tax shelters. And a lot went to managers' fees. I'm not broke, though. I was doing everything crazy. Now I'm with a professional, Marty. Now I'm buying tax-free funds and pension funds and bonds. In a couple years, I'll run into money. I wanna do things right. Not everybody gets the chance to make the kind of money I get. I feel confident that I can stop boxing now and have enough money. I don't want to be broke like Leon Spinks. Financially, believe me, Marty's the best. Marty don't take my money like other people did. He just wants his expenses paid.

Q: He has the job of trying to control your career. But that involves controlling you. Is it possible to control you? Would you want the job of having to control you?

A: Oh, I'm a little sweetheart. Let it be right, let it be fair, let it be with respect, and I'm easy to handle. Ask Jimmy Montoya. If he tells you something else, then he's really a creep. I'm very easy to handle. I'm just not easy to tell what to do. If you train me and do it right, there is no reason I should come off on you. I'm perfect to work with. But I'm too good sometimes. They take my goodness for weakness and try to take advantage of me. That's the whole thing with me. As a person, I'm too good sometimes.

Q: In your best performances as a fighter, people have said that you've been almost too good. Is there still more to unveil?

A: Believe me *(in a pleading tone)*, I still haven't shown Macho Camacho. The best of me didn't come out in the Ramirez fight and especially not in the Rosario fight. The day I feel the way I felt in the Ramirez fight and I'm under pressure like I was in the Rosario fight, I'll do my best. Then I'll say, "goddamn, that's the best fight of my life."

CAMACHO UPDATE

Although he's still active at age 40, Camacho, 75-4-2 (36), was never the same fighter after the Rosario fight. Over the years, he's pretty much made a mockery of his "Macho Man" nickname with a negative, safety-first style. He tallied one more defense of the WBC lightweight title, outpointing Cornelius Boza-Edwards in September 1986, then moved up to the junior welterweight division. Camacho never won another major title, losing bids against Julio Cesar Chavez (WBC junior welter), Felix Trinidad (IBF welterweight), and Oscar De La Hoya (WBC welterweight). That pesky little kid who kept interrupting the phone conversations between Camacho and Ryan turned pro in '96, but has proved to be an even bigger disappointment than his father.

FRANKIE DUARTE

"Boxing Changed My Life Around"

FRANKIE DUARTE'S ODYSSEY into what he calls the life of a sloppy bum began at the age of 13 when he started sniffing glue. A year later, he gave up that "kid's stuff" to take "downers and reds" instead. By 15, it was marijuana and the beginning of a long marriage to alcohol. Then came heroin, PCP, and LSD. That Duarte never ended up overdosing, getting pummeled by a gang of street toughs in his hometown of Venice, California, or doing more than two weeks in a jail cell is surprising enough. That he could embark on a pro boxing career at the age of 19 and begin punching out some of the world's best bantamweights with arms he was poking with hypodermic needles is just plain remarkable.

Eventually, Duarte's surplus of toughness couldn't overcome his lack of judgment anymore, and he gave up the ring at the age of 26. What followed redefines the word "remarkable." He kicked drugs and drinking cold turkey and without anyone's help, and returned to action three years later (at 29, Social Security age for a lighter-weight fighter). Another case of a washed-up has-been returning in a suicidal attempt to recapture past glory? Hardly. Act II has featured the capturing of the NABF title, the dropping of a close decision to WBA king Bernardo Pinango, and, this past June 27, a wild CBS shootout with old nemesis Albert Davila.

Just nine days later, on July 6, Jeff Ryan spoke with boxing's quintessential warrior from the North Hollywood, California, office of Duarte's manager, Dan Goossen. Among the topics the two men discussed was that bloody war, which Duarte won on a 10th-round TKO. (Davila is appealing the decision.) It was sweet revenge for a sixth-round kayo Davila scored over Duarte almost 10 years to the day earlier.

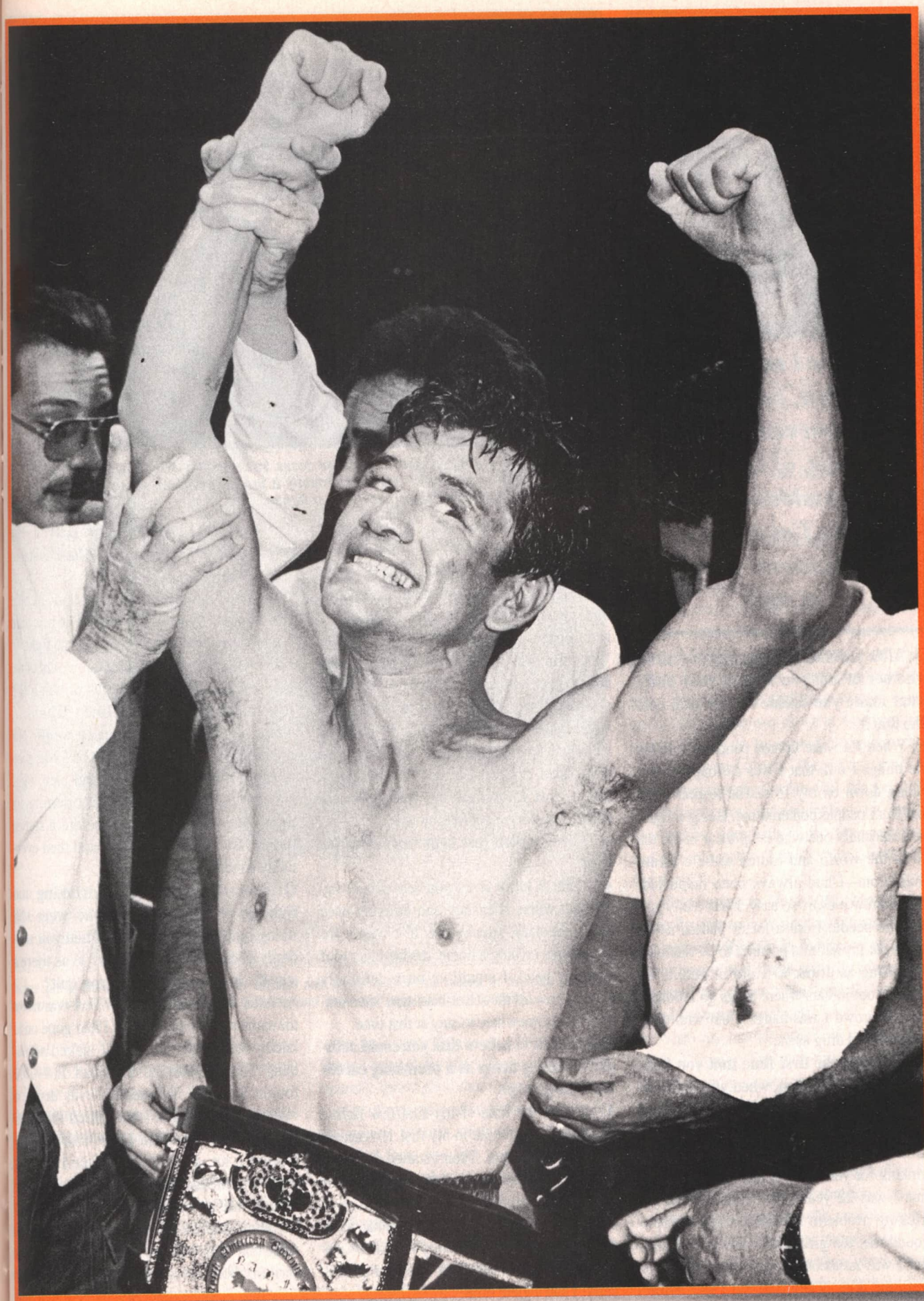
Now 33, Duarte was found to be a man without any inhibitions. His sheer joy at still being able to fight is reflected in his honesty and sincerity. And an hour-long talk with him is an examination of the unique thinking of a fighter, as well as a fascinating study of a person who was able to channel once-paralyzing insecurity into the confidence that has helped him make some incredible, Houdini-like escapes in the ring.

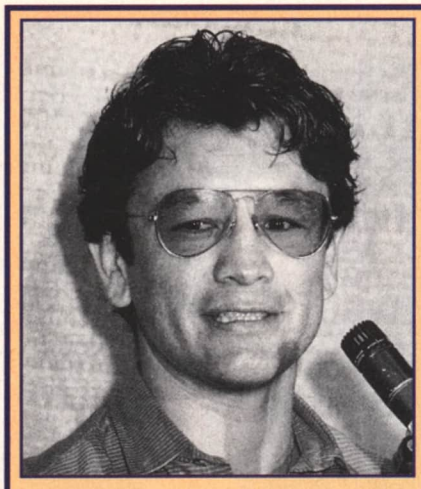
The interview was not without its disturbing moments, however. Duarte's close friends, as well as his manager, Goossen, have expressed concern that he retire and help film a movie about his life story before absorbing any more severe beatings. While Duarte's speech did not seem slurred, he did have a disturbing tendency to lose his train of thought during the interview. The negative effects of a 53-bout career, perhaps? Let's hope not. For if you can't tell by now, The Frankie Duarte Story wasn't meant to end tragically. If it was, it would have never gotten past the first act.

Interview conducted July 1987

Q: You've got a very special anniversary coming up in about four days, don't you?

A: Oh, June 10. Is it already? No, that was July 10. That's four years from the day I quit drinking. I was in a lot of trouble from the drinking and drugs I was doing. One day I just didn't like what I was doing, so I decided to quit. I remember the place. I was in Redondo Beach and I remember having my last drink. I haven't had a drop since then.





"I know I take a lot of punches, hard shots, but what causes brain damage, of course, is concussions. I don't believe I'm receiving concussions. I hope I'm right."

Duarte's victory over previously undefeated Jesus Salud in July '86 brought him the Stroh's Tournament title and $50,000. More importantly it proved wrong all those who said that he was incapable of being a championship-level fighter.

Q: After years of drinking and not caring whether or not you abused your body, what made you decide to just stop cold like that?

A: When I'd wake up and people would tell me things I did, that I was a sloppy drunk, falling down on my face. The respect I had lost from people bothered me. Being a fighter—especially one who is up there in the top 10 in the world and touted to be a future champion—I had always been respected. And I threw it away so easy. I was really getting the needle from a lot of people about that. I put myself in a position to be ridiculed by getting as drunk as I did in public, by hanging out in bars where drugs go around a lot. The crowd I was hanging out with were all pretty bad drug users.

Q: Was that the first time that you fully realized your problem, when you were sitting in that bar in Redondo Beach, having that drink?

A: Really, I knew I had a problem with drinking for years before that. I'd say by the time I was 22 years old I realized I had a drinking problem. I wouldn't quit. People around me, the girlfriend I had at the time, said I was an alcoholic and I denied it, like everyone does. They told me I had symptoms, like blacking out. This was during my fight career, too, during the time I was a world contender. A couple of years later, I realized I was an alcoholic and I needed to quit. Once I did quit for about 11 months. I had stopped and I had no temptation to drink. What drove me back that time was just that I had no job, nothing really going for me. So one day I said, "I'm going to drink for a while again, and then quit again." This time I went in deeper. I would say I got worse than I had been before I had quit. And I, *um*, it just ... you know, got *uh*, really *uh*, you know, I'm sorry. I got interrupted.

Q: The situation just kept worsening for you?

A: Yeah. A lot of times you hear people say they get worse after they quit drinking once and come back. I really did. If it wasn't for my parents owning a home, me having a roof over my head, I would've been definitely heading toward the street-bum type situation. But I had somewhere to stay at that time.

Q: It's hard to believe that you could actually be taking drugs as a promising career was taking shape.

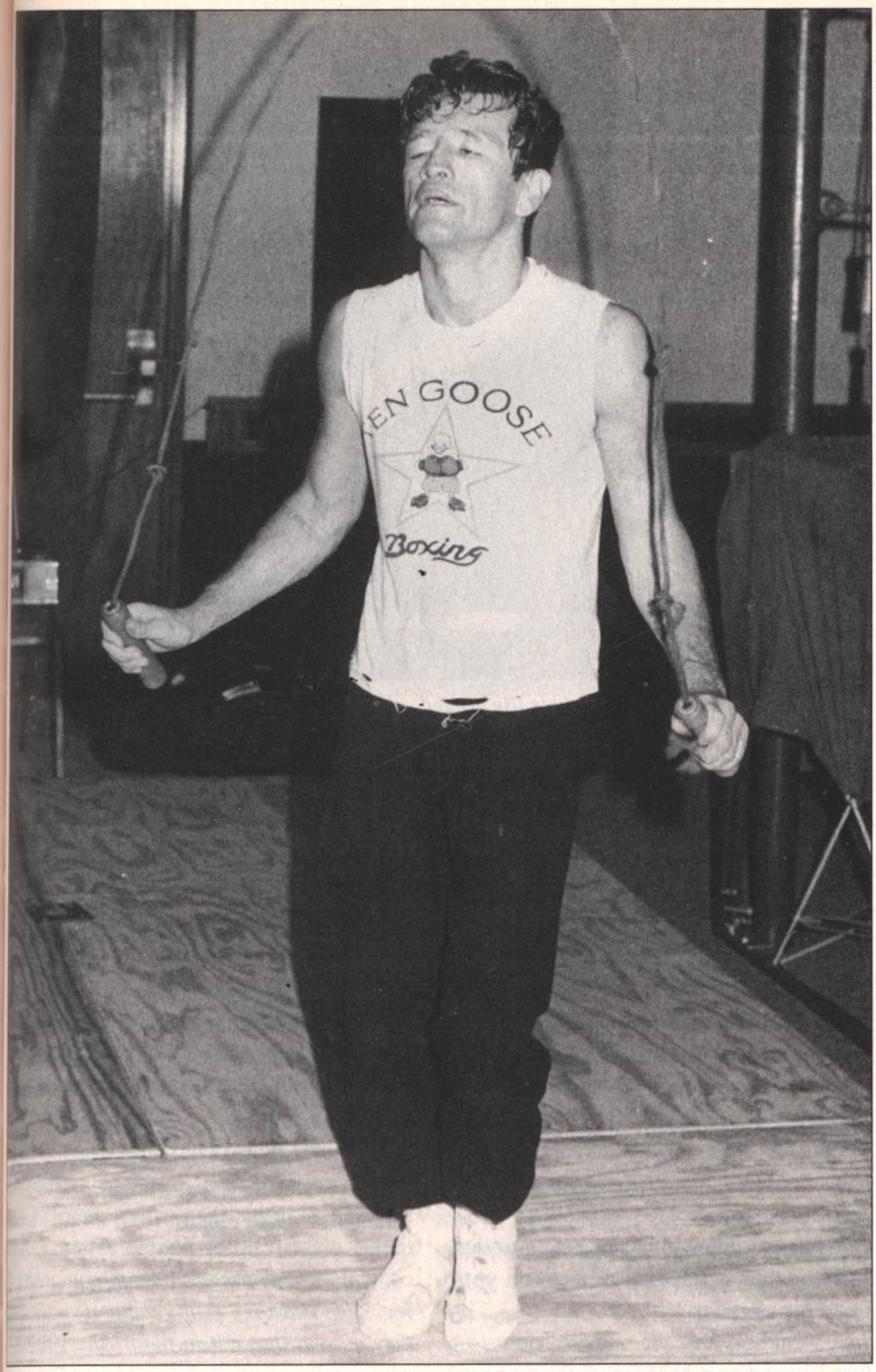
A: Around the time of my first few fights, my prelims, I did that. In my first 10-rounder I was pretty straight. Then I started doing ... I would say drinking was my biggest problem. I started drinking a lot. I wanted to go to every party because I was real popular from fighting on TV a lot. Everyone knew me from the neighborhood and when I'd go to a party, I had a great time.

Q: Was it the attention you craved, the party atmosphere, or the actual taste of the alcohol?

A: I would say it was the only way I could function in front of people. They would come up to me and tell me, "Great fight." I had low self-esteem and nothing would come out of my mouth unless I was drinking. I'd just mumble something like, "Thanks," almost apologetic. It was really weird. The drinking took that fear away. And I was pretty cool for a while, drinking and partying. I started knowing how to act, opening up more. But it didn't take long before it started turning me into a loud person and then eventually a real bum.

Q: Even though you were drinking and fighting at the same time, you were still doing quite well in the ring. Then you suddenly decided to retire. Why? Was there a specific instance that made you quit?

A: After the Davila fight in '77, I was never the same again, even though I had gone on to knock some guys out. I had lacked something. That loss hurt me really bad. In 1979, I fought Rolando Navarette. I was drunk a week before the fight. I did LSD. I didn't do a lot of it, but I did a little. I drank and smoked a lot, and I went into the ring with Navarette in really bad shape. I took a bad beating. He hit me with everything he had. He didn't stop, he just kept coming forward. After that fight I felt so much pain, I was so hurt, my body, everything. I said to myself, "It's one or the other, my partying or my



Duarte grew increasingly dependent on alcohol and drugs, and a few weeks of training was not sufficient to prepare him for fights. His career—and life—had spiraled out of control.

fighting career." Being a very realistic person, I realized I wasn't gonna quit drinking, so I chose the partying life.

Q: Looking back on it, that was a pretty foolish decision, considering all the talent you had.

A: But I knew if I stayed in, I was gonna get hurt. I had to figure out how to quit drinking, or how to alter my way of thinking to get me to quit drinking. But I had no intentions of ever making a comeback even after I quit drinking. I listened to the experts: "You can't come back after five years of retirement." There was a fight after the Navarette fight [actually four fights] that I don't even count as part of my retirement. I did it strictly for the money. I made a few bucks. But aside from that there was five years off. *Um*, but, *um*, I'm sorry what was, again I get caught up in …

Q: Explain to us, and to the people who are reading this who might have a similar problem, exactly how you went about quitting. You did so on your own, didn't you?

A: Yeah. I had gone to an AA meeting or two and it just wasn't something … I couldn't relate to it. It wasn't what I needed. I needed to get involved in something, and that first time I stopped drinking for 11 months, I had a job. It was okay, so it kept me going. A lousy job, but it kept me going.

Q: What type of job was that?

A: Swimming pool maintenance. I wasn't too good with that. The second time I quit, *uh*, I'm sorry, what did you ask me?

Q: The second time you quit, you said you did so without the help of AA?

A: Well, during the 11 months I had quit drinking, I had actually gone on to harder drugs and I'd been having problems with certain ones. Heroin was the worst. I never really got hooked on any of them except for the heroin at the end. There was some withdrawal when I quit. But I wasn't the real hard-core type, one who had to steal every day just to keep his habit up. I could get by with 50 bucks.

Q: You just quit all the drugs cold turkey?

A: Yeah.

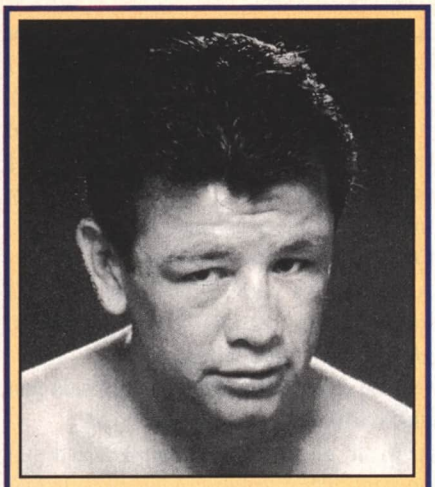
Q: That's amazing.

A: What was really the strongest motivator was how much I'd seen that it was hurting my own family, what I was doing to myself. Falling from a position where people had a lot of respect for me and really wanted to be around me, all the way down to a person that no one wanted to be around. Someone who was sloppy and drunk. There's a picture I have of me, hanging on the wall. It's me with these skinny arms and skinny legs, fat, puffy face and big beer belly. I pass it once a day and say to myself, "I don't wanna look like that again."

Q: After losing to Navarette, you fought basically just to pick up a paycheck. Then you retired officially in February of 1981. Three years and three months later, you returned to action. What was the springboard for your comeback?

A: When my mother asked me to leave our house. I went to live with my aunt. I found myself needing money and wanting to gain back respect. I knew it was gonna take a lot of doing to get rid of the reputation I had built up as a drug addict and alcoholic. I knew it was gonna take something really big to make a comeback after that long layoff. Looking at things realistically, at that time I had no idea I was gonna get into all this.

It was a question of getting some transportation and getting a regular job, but I had



"In 1979, I fought Rolando Navarette. I was drunk a week before the fight. I did LSD. I didn't do a lot of it, but I did a little. I drank and smoked a lot, and I went into the ring with Navarette in really bad shape. I took a bad beating."

On July 10, 1983, Duarte turned his life around, giving up booze and drugs cold-turkey. After seeing his body fall apart, he was understandably proud of the way he looked and performed against such fighters as Ron Cisneros (TKO 7).

to get a good payday first. That's when I was introduced to the Goossen family. I only wanted to make $18,000, just to pay the mortgage up on my home, then quit again. I had told a local referee my intention. He said, "Frankie, you better think about quitting *now*." He said that because I had my eye really swollen up in two of my three comeback fights. He said, "Your health is more important. Frank, c'mon, where are you gonna make $18,000?" Now I look back and see how silly I must have seemed to him. 'Cause bantamweights don't make that kind of money. But I won $50,000 in the Stroh's tournament, $15,000 when I fought Bernardo Pinango, and $55,000 fighting Davila. And I'm sure there's another big one coming up.

Q: Perhaps your kicking the drug habit isn't such a big surprise when one realizes what a determined person you have always been. We understand that as a child, one of your favorite things to do was walk around the house and lift up furniture to get attention.

A: *(Laughs)* Boy, that's a … I haven't heard that one in a long time. Where ever did you get that? I was about four or five years old. I was a natural-born showoff. When people would come over to the house, I wanted attention, to be the central attraction, I guess. I'd just casually walk over to the couch and lift one end up to show how strong I was. 'Cause I guess back then, people were like "Oh, wow, boy, you're *strong*." You know, babytalking me. At the time I took it as a compliment, so I continued doing it. I guess there's some kind of connection with that and my being a boxer today *(laughs)*.

Q: That was going to be our next question. Was boxing a natural outlet for your quest for attention?

A: I would say that the number-one reason that I boxed was because of the respect I would gain, yes. I had low self-esteem as a teenager, so I was really super self-conscious of myself. I felt less than everyone. I would daydream about things like being a fighter, being with people who were asking for autographs. Normal dreams anybody wanting to be a boxer would have. And I dreamed of the big battles.

Q: After you became a professional fighter, you proved to yourself that you were just as good as anybody else, if not better. When you look back at that period of insecurity that preceded your boxing career, do you have any explanation for why your self-esteem was so low?

A: I guess it's the way I took things. I was not mistreated. I can't really pinpoint why. I don't remember whether or not people made fun of me, whether I was a teased kid or not. I don't really think I was. I know that is the reason why some people turn out that way.

Q: How could it be that even when you were winning your first 16 fights, you were still suffering from this tremendous inferiority complex?

A: The only time I felt really equal to anybody was when I was in the actual boxing atmosphere. Even then it was weird. Even then I was afraid of people. They would come up to me and ask for my autograph. I felt like, *Did they really want it or would they go and throw it in the trash?* I think I was overly sensitive. I would say I'm still that way. Maybe it's a built-in thing with me.

Q: Give us an example of something that would really bother you now.

A: After the fight with Davila the other night, everyone was happy. I'm sure any other fighter would have been happy, too. "All right, now I get a title shot." That's the first thing in your mind, yet I was really depressed after the fight. Everyone in the Forum crowd was cheering me as I walked out, saying "Hey, great fight." You know, really upbeat. I was the only one who was really depressed. Sure, here I was getting a title shot, but the impression I might have left

Duarte's relationship with Dan Goossen was a major factor in his comeback. Ironic, isn't it, that the two are photographed in front of a Budweiser banner?

n a lot of people really bothered me. I don't want to do anything to lose fans, and something like this situation with Davila was out of my control.

Q: You are referring to the fact that he was cut and the fight was stopped at a point when he was leading on the cards.

A: Yeah. I realize that. You know, I was pretty far behind on points. Sometimes I start later than other times. With a lot of my fights, I don't really get cooking until the eighth round sometimes. This time it took a little longer. The fight got stopped in the 10th before I could show people, yes, I was gonna come on stronger. I would have had to win the last two rounds. I might have even needed a knockdown, I don't know. But I was real confident I was gonna do it. I realize a lot of people out there are thinking I got a lucky win. And that's one of the things that scares me—how the fans react. How many did I lose from that fight, especially with Davila badmouthing me right now? He's trying to knock the way I fight. That bothers me because I know people who don't know that much about boxing or fighting …

Q: They might believe him.

A: Yeah. And I never claimed to be no fancy boxer. I'm not the greatest technician in the world. I get sloppy at times and I take a lot of punches. But there's a lot of skills people just don't recognize: punching ability, the ability to take a punch, endurance to go on. I consider myself an entertainer, not a businessman. I don't go in there trying to come out with as little lumps as possible and doing as little as possible to win. A lot of fighters have that attitude. I go out there to win. But by fighting, not by tapping, or running, or holding, or clinching.

I have a different kind of fan, I think. My girlfriend said she that the fans really like me personally, rather than just strictly as a fighter. That's part of my sensitivity. I'm aware of their feelings and it makes me fight harder.

Q: Compare the Davila and Duarte who met in 1977 with the two warriors who punched each other out in 1987. What weren't either of you able to do anymore that you could do in your primes?

A: I would say with Davila, everything was just as good as before—every move he made, his strategy. But he didn't have the speed he had. He didn't put the punches together as quick, and that's kind of funny to say as much as I got hit *(laughs)*. The difference between me now and back in '77 was that my reflexes ain't the same. I see an opening, but don't always jump right on it. My rhythm isn't as good. That's what it was like at times in there. I got better endurance now, though.

Q: The first time you fought him, didn't you have great difficulty making the weight?

A: Yeah, well, back then my biggest weakness was my drug and alcohol use. I didn't feel that good at all. Only three weeks before the fight I came in the gym and tried to get in shape. I tried to make the weight the night before by taking water pills, dehydrating. I didn't know how to make the weight back then, how to get down, what not to eat. I was really out of shape.

Q: You've explained to us how you conquered the booze, but how did you overcome the insecurity?

A: It was years of talking myself into believing I'm equal to anybody and have my own special qualities, like anybody else. Some people are artists, some are actors, some are fighters. After I made a comeback, I started using what I told myself to make me able to face people. My first fight back I realized, *Hey, I did something pretty good here.* Of course, not very many people were interested in my comeback at first. I was an underdog all the time. But the TV fights finally gave me recognition, and with each fight I got a little stronger. Winning started building up my self-confidence.

Q: What I find incredible is that boxing was obviously the main focus in your life, the one thing that always let you know that you were as important as everybody else in the world. Yet it was something that you were so willing to throw away without so much as a second thought.

A: It's funny. When I was coming up, I would be recognized at restaurants and asked for my autograph. I would be driving my car and someone would go "Hey, Frankie!" wave their fist, you know, give me the power sign. I was really popular. Everyone would think I'd be the next champion of the world. But there'd be times I'd be there in bed and wake up in the morning and think about things and say, "Why don't I feel special?" When I would daydream about me being in that position, I pictured it as being this great power that I would feel. And I wondered why I didn't feel it. So I continued drinking. After years have gone by, and I've gotten the cheers again, I now recognize the special feeling. It's a feeling of walking tall.

Q: Do you know why you have it now and didn't have it back then?

A: Oh, I did have it back then, but I didn't recognize it. I do now. I'm not sure why.

Q: Maybe because you appreciate getting the second chance that most fighters never have.

A: That's one thing, I'd say. I feel way better

"After years have gone by, and I've gotten the cheers again, I now recognize the special feeling. It's a feeling of walking tall."

about myself now than I did back then. Now I appreciate it so much more. That's why every fight I fight a hard fight. I'm willing to take a lot to give back a little, knowing that my heart can come through and I'll be the winner at the end. I know what it's gonna be to lose this position. I value it more than most young fighters do. They don't know what it is not to have it.

After I was out of the ring for a few years, no one knew who I was anymore. I got introduced to a welding class I was in at Santa Monica College during my retirement years. I got introduced to the class, well, it was during roll call. When they said "Frank Duarte," I expected one person at least to remember me from fighting. No one knew me. Years ago, I had thought that it was gonna last forever, and when it didn't, when the people started saying, "Frank Who?" that hurt a lot. I fight hard during this comeback because I know what someone's trying to take from me. I take it real personally when someone like Davila is degrading what I do, my skills, saying I have no fundamentals. I know one thing: There's a lot of skills I don't have. But what makes me feel good is that my fights always turn out entertaining because of the way I fight.

Q: We'd like to touch on a few of your more entertaining comeback fights. Your career in the last two years has almost played like an episode of *Amazing Stories*. I'll mention some of the fights and a few details about them, and you give me your recollections. First is an April 1985 bout with Richie Sandoval. At the time, he's the WBA bantamweight champion, and you're considered to be nothing more than an easy non-title tune-up. He ends up winning, but by a close split decision.

A: It was my fourth comeback fight and I was really hyped up for that. *Wow, this is my chance. This would shock boxing 'cause nobody is taking this comeback seriously.* I was supposed to go maybe two rounds with him. But I was in such good shape, determined and confident in training. Then I remember walking across the street from my hotel to the arena. All the reality of it just came down on me like a ton of bricks. I thought, *Wait a minute, can this be real? Do I really have a chance? I mean, the experts say I can't do it.*

I looked back at fighters who tried to come back and got stopped by a champion. Could that really happen to me? This was gonna answer everything. Tonight, I would know how realistic my idea of ever being a champion would be. Sandoval was the champion of the world, so everyone was for him. It was really kind of a hurting feeling. Not hurting, but just, *Oh, man, I gotta win this fight and they'll be cheering for me the same way.* He hit me with some fast, hard combinations early, like at the end of the first round. Then he hit me again with a combination in the second round. I think that's when I caught him, came right back and stunned him with a good bodyshot. And then he realized it was gonna be a tougher fight than he thought, and he started really moving and jabbing. He was too fast for me. But I was always the aggressor. I made the fight. That time I wasn't ready for Richard Sandoval as much as I would be in the future. I did get much better.

Q: What lingering questions did that fight answer in your own mind?

A: The idea that I could take a punch. That I still hit hard, because I had stunned him and hurt him a few times. That I do have the endurance to go a good, hard 10 rounds with a quality fighter. And that I had heart and desire to fight hard in a fight like that.

Q: Let's move up to July '86. You're battling Jesus Salud for $50,000 in the finals of the Stroh's bantamweight tournament at the Forum. You're cut over both eyes and inside the mouth, but you're leading on the cards, and in the ninth round you close his eye and the referee stops the bout.

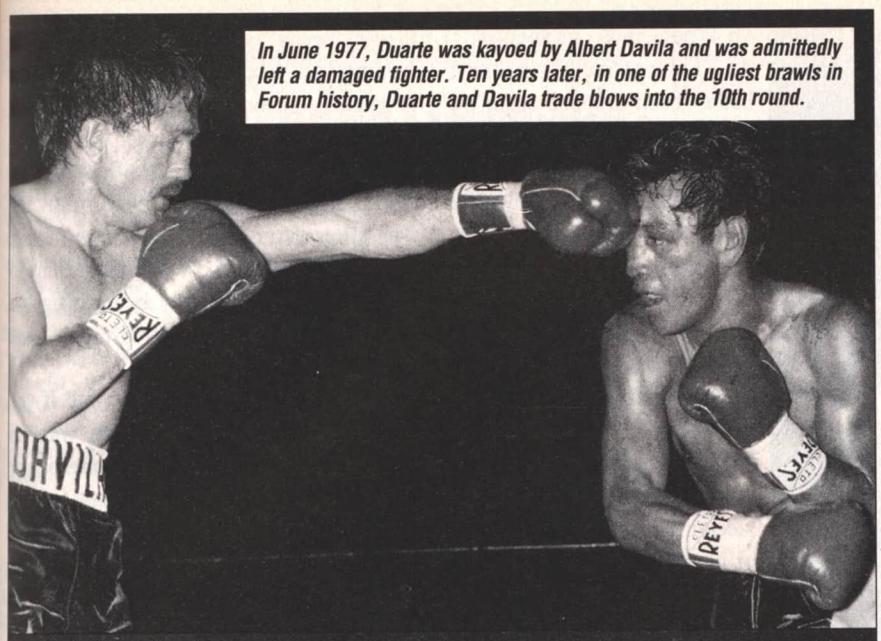
A: That was *the* fight, the one that was gonna make the comeback worthwhile. I had to get over a fight like this in order to prove that the people who told me I shouldn't fight anymore were wrong. It wasn't the world title, but it wasn't just another 10-round small club fight. It was $50,000 and meeting a good, undefeated fighter for the North American championship, besides the Stroh's title. There was so much to gain that I trained for it like it was a world title fight. I was just real confident. I'd seen him fight and I figured he had the style perfect for me, which is coming in. I had become real popular at the Forum already because of the two fights that I had there with Mike Moreno, which was a real war, and Georgie Garcia, which I was trailing on points before I stopped him.

Q: How does it feel knowing that when you went into The Forum a few years ago, nobody remembered who you were, but now you've become such a favorite there?

A: Oh, man, the best feeling I ever had was coming to the ring when I was fighting for the world title. It was like a movie. It was like waking up in a dream. The moment I left the dressing room there was a big cheer, a standing ovation, and I just couldn't believe that. Then I realized that the comeback that I made came out far bigger than I ever dreamed.

Q: In your championship fight with Pinango, you floored him, kept up a steady attack, and appeared to have won. Then he was awarded the decision. You had to be thinking to yourself, *I trained hard. I earned this shot. I did everything that could have possibly been asked of me during this comeback Then I beat this guy and they took it from me. It's not fair. How could I come this far and have it stolen?* Is that an accurate picture of your feelings at the time?

A: I was not sure of anything right after that fight. Actually, I had been convinced that I won by the reaction I got from the crowd, my corner, ex-fighters. Everyone convinced me that I won. Fighters who say, "Oh, man, I thought I won. I know I won a close fight" are full of bull because it's too tough to score a fight in there. So that's why I was so unsure during the fight. But by the time the fight was over I was convinced I deserved to win. When they announced Pinango as the



In June 1977, Duarte was kayoed by Albert Davila and was admittedly left a damaged fighter. Ten years later, in one of the ugliest brawls in Forum history, Duarte and Davila trade blows into the 10th round.

winner, I just heard the first two words.

Q: What were the two words?

A: And still …

Q: Bad words for a challenger to hear.

A: Yeah. I wanted to hear "And new… " Ouch. By the time of the press conference after the fight, I was convinced I was outright robbed, even though I was going by what everyone else had thought. Then after I saw the fight—I know it was a close fight—I realized it's the way you score a fight. There was a lot of times he touched me. Boxing, as I recall, is scored on punches. He touched me way more than I punched him. But I was the only one who came out with real genuine punches that shake you. He never shook me or hurt me in the least bit. After reviewing the fight, I thought I had won by my way of scoring fights. I understand the idea that people judge on the touches. I just don't care for those kind of judges too much.

Q: The bout that probably epitomized your tremendous fighting spirit was your war with Pulga Torres last September. You were cut over both eyes and the ringside physician examined the cuts seven times without stopping the bout. You rallied to drop him in the seventh, and then stopped him in the ninth. Talk about complete desperation. By the sixth or seventh time the doctor looked at the cuts, you had to be certain that the fight was going to be stopped in Torres' favor.

A: I'd seen the title shot go out the window. I said, "Oh, no. What am I gonna do?" So I just went out there and punched. I had no idea if I would be stopped or if I'd win. But all I could do every moment was go for the knockout.

Q: Is that a panicky feeling?

A: It was really panicky. I would say it made me freeze a little with nerves at times and it made me overexcited at other times. I was unable to keep my composure just right. He was a tough fighter, but he wasn't a world contender, and I gotta say I took him a little lightly. As experienced as I am, I know you don't do that with any fighter. I've seen it happen too many times where a tune-up fighter becomes a winner because of a fighter underestimating him. With all this in mind, I still found myself thinking about other things instead of the fight. I thought it was a win in the bag. I had no furniture in my house because I had gotten rid of all of it when they recarpeted. I was thinking things like: *I hope the furniture man is gonna be here in time*

When the referee stopped the fight in Duarte's favor due to cuts, Davila was leading on the scorecards. Davila didn't have anything nice to say about Frankie afterward, but even he must have appreciated this great comeback story.

for the afterfight gathering we have. That's how upsets happen. But it's weird. When your mind starts wandering, sometimes it's uncontrollable.

Q: The flipside to all the excitement the warrior performances create and all the accolades they earn you, of course, is the damage you suffer in these bouts. Fighters don't like to admit it, but the type of battles you've had in the last few years are the ones that can leave you with serious physical damage years from now. Does that ever cross your mind?

A: Yeah, it does. I think about it. I know I take a lot of punches, hard shots, but what causes brain damage, of course, is concussions. When you get concussions, I don't care how tough you are, if your brain hits against the skull, you short-circuit, your knees buckle, you see cobwebs, and your equilibrium, or something like that, is thrown out. I think, I hope *(laughs),* that I'm not receiving concussions. I don't get hurt. It was very unusual for me to get knocked off my feet by Davila. It was a weird punch.

Q: What exactly happened?

A: That was really strange. I hadn't been dropped since we fought last time. He just kind of stepped to his left real deliberately and perfectly threw that left hook. It was no real mystery, it was like he pushed a button and my knees gave way. I've been slightly dazed a couple of times, but I just don't wobble. I take a good punch. I think it's because I'm a big bantamweight. I've got a good neck. I don't believe I'm receiving concussions. A fighter can have just a couple of fights and come out punchy. Maybe he has a weak neck or he can't take punches. The brain slams around in his head really easy.

Then you have a fighter like Archie Moore. He's gotta be nearly 80 and he's fine. He had some tough, tough fights in the days when they didn't stop fights. I remember watching him fight Yvon Durelle, getting dropped several times, and then coming on to knock him out. I spoke with him and you'd never know he was a fighter. He spoke very well. I think as long as you take care of yourself and stay in good shape, then your brain won't take the beating that your body takes. And I hope I'm right. It seems real logical to me *(laughs).*

Q: Hopefully you are right. If something happened and you were punchy, though, say in your 40s or 50s, if your speech was slurred or your walk was slowed, would you regret having come back to fight?

A: Not at all. 'Cause if it weren't for that, I might have died of an OD, car accident, anything, a lot sooner than I would have with boxing. Boxing changed my life around.

Q: What would you say to the people who can't understand that tradeoff? People who say, "Geez, I wouldn't give up my faculties for anything."

A: Well, for one thing, to each his own. What's important to me and what makes me happy is my business and I'm willing to risk that. It's a lot less painful than the agony I would have had out of the ring, being drunk, being as disrespected as I was. Boxing is a way out and it's saved many people. If someone abolished boxing before I had my time, I wouldn't have had the great things that happened to me. And I'd sure be angry that a great piece of my life was taken from me. I'm a boxer. I'm a fighter. That's the most important thing to me right now in life, my being a fighter. That's the way I wanna live my life and that's what I wanna be.

Q: What, then, remains for you? If you win the title, you'll obviously want to make some defenses to get some bigger purses. You may have the heart to fight 50 more times, but you don't seem to have three or four good fights left in you. So, win or lose, when will you quit?

A: Being the champion is, of course, the highest point, the most important thing. Once I reach that goal, I'll have accomplished almost everything, except I'd have to cash in on that title. I would say the moment that I don't feel motivated, when I lose my desire, I'll stop. But I don't expect that to be for a heck of a long time.

Q: If you don't win the title, would you still be satisfied? Has this all been worthwhile?

A: *(Emphatically)* Oh, yeah! After my first comeback fight it would have been worthwhile, because after all the years out of the ring, it was great just to get back in there for the first time. People just can't relate to the feeling you get with the crowd cheering you while you're winning. To have won the Stroh's tournament, that was great. To get a title shot, that was great. And it's still going on and even more people are getting to know me. I've made a good accomplishment.

DUARTE UPDATE

Duarte only fought four more times after this interview. In his final bout, he challenged WBC super bantamweight titleholder Daniel Zaragoza in August 1989, losing via 10th-round TKO. His overall pro record was 46-8-1 (34). These days Duarte is married, has a child, and works as a barber in the Venice Beach area of Los Angeles. Veteran matchmaker Jerry Bilderrain still sees him from time to time, and says that although Duarte has put on a few pounds, he's still a good-looking guy. "I call him the Mexican Brad Pitt," said Bilderrain.

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ROY JONES

"I Don't Intend To Avoid No One"

IT WAS APPROPRIATE that we interviewed Roy Jones within the confines of Times Square on this Saturday afternoon in March. Not because, as writer Jimmy Cannon once said, boxing is the sports world's red-light district, but because Times Square is the crossroads of the world. It is a place where dreams are fulfilled or hopes crushed. It is color and bright light, and sparkle and promise, mixing with violent, intimidating surroundings.

This is Roy Jones' time to prove that he really is as good as we have suspected he was. Four years into a pro career that advanced at a crawl from 1989 through '91, but has been strictly pedal-to-the-metal in the past year, he is on the verge of a crack at a middleweight title. Soon after you read this, he will get it, probably against fellow power-hitter Bernard Hopkins in a shootout for the vacant IBF crown.

Jones is a special talent, someone who blends blazing speed with crippling punching power and then splashes a whole bunch of attitude on top of it all for the finishing touch. His record is a perfect 21-0 (20), and 12 of his opponents have exited in three rounds or less. He's good, and he knows that better than anybody.

On this day, Jones wasn't nearly as cocky as we had expected him to be, nor as uncooperative as he has been on occasions in the past. He gets moody, he explained, when he's training for a fight. When it's leisure time (he was in New York to meet with the executives of HBO and attend the Pernell Whitaker-Buddy McGirt fight), he is, while hardly loose, at least more willing to share his feelings.

During the course of a 45-minute interview with Jeff Ryan, Jones rarely changed his stoic expression, but provided more of a look into his life and aspirations than we'd gotten in our brief encounters with him in the past. He relived the controversial and gut-wrenching split decison that denied him a certain gold medal in Seoul in 1988, talked of his publicized 1992 breakup with his father and former manager, Roy Sr., and defended a ring style that often comes off as purely demeaning to the often-overmatched opponent in front of him.

Controversy, if you haven't guessed, is just another part of the Jones package. Ironic that a guy who puts so many people to sleep is going to make so many others sit up straight, open their eyes wide, and pay very, very close attention.

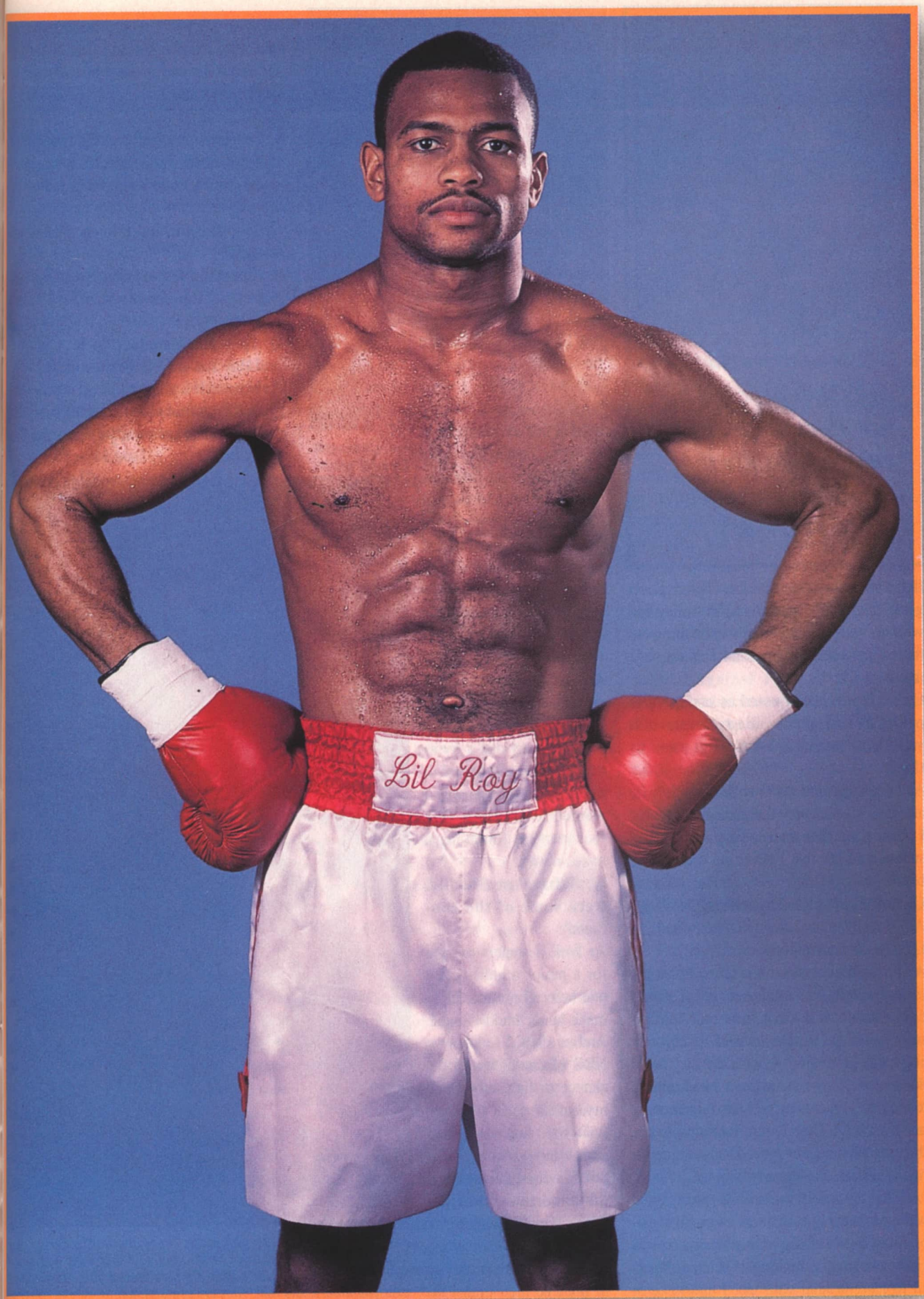
Interview conducted March 1993

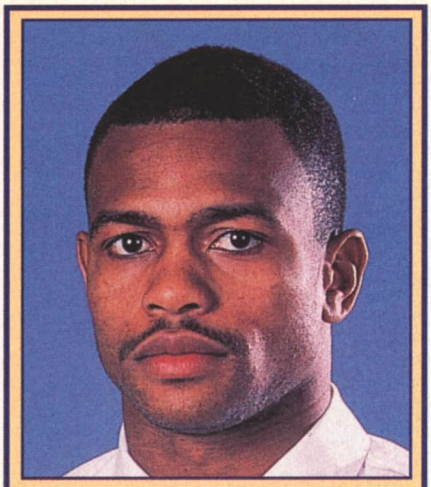
Q: There is a star quality surrounding you, something that is difficult to describe. There have been plenty of promising talents to come along and excite people in recent years, but there is a kind of electricity generated when you're in the ring. Can you describe what it is that makes you so special?

A: God's light shines in certain people. I'm the same fighter I was the first day I went out and fought as a pro, but a lot of people don't know that. People are excited because nobody knows what to really expect from me. I have speed, I have power. I guess when you put it all together, it's very exciting. There's a lot of flash in me.

Q: Do you know what to expect from yourself, or are you surprised by some of the things you do?

A: Sometimes I surprise myself. I fight my


Lil Roy



"I see the world the way that people who are 35 or 40 do. I had such a hard life that I never got a chance to be a kid."

fights in my head several times before I ever get in the ring. I know what I'm feeling and what to expect, but sometimes it turns out three times better than what I could have dreamed.

Q: You have been quoted as saying, "I'm probably one of the oldest 24-year-olds you'll ever meet." What did you mean by that?

A: I see the world the way that people who are 35 or 40 do. I have that mentality because I grew up earlier than most people. I had such a hard life that I never got a chance to be a kid.

Q: Describe the hard upbringing.

A: I'd really rather not get into it.

Q: Give us an overview.

A: I was brought up on a farm. From the time I was in elementary school, I would come home and have tons and tons of responsibilities to take care of. Everybody else came home from school, and they could do whatever they wanted to do. I had animals to feed, and other things. I had to squeeze my homework in. Then I went to learn boxing, then my evening was over. I had no time for my friends, no time for anything.

I had too much responsibility, really, and it stayed that way until I was 14 or 15. I really didn't have friends because everyone was either smoking or drinking. When they wanted to hang around with me, I had to be at boxing practice, so I didn't have time for that. I was alone.

Q: Was it your father who kept you from getting into trouble, or did that decision come from within?

A: Both. I always felt like if I did something wrong, my father would kill me. He probably would have. But then, at a certain age, I figured out that I could do what I wanted. I stayed out of trouble because, as I was growing up, I would see instances where my friends would do reckless things. I saw what happened to them, and none of it was ever good. By the time I was 15, I had decided that I wanted to make sure I gave myself a fair chance at success. I felt that if I didn't stay out of trouble, I would be stuck in the same environment all my life. I didn't want to be in that environment.

Q: Your father was your manager-trainer from the time you turned pro in 1989, and was severely criticized for selecting soft opposition. Was it a disagreement over the quality of your opponents that eventually led to a rift with him?

A: Not necessarily. It was emotional family problems. When I turned pro, I decided to give my dad a try as my manager and trainer. It didn't work out the way I wanted it to for the first four years, so I'm trying it my own way.

Q: What, specifically, were some of the conflicts?

A: Well, I wanted to fight for a junior middleweight title before I got too big to make junior middleweight. And in 1989, I fought two NBC telecast fights. I had a chance to fight more, and my father didn't let me fight. I felt that was a decision I should have made, not somebody else. I had the opportunity to fight Glenn Wolfe. Glenn Wolfe then was like Glenn Wolfe now. I had a little more fire in my eye then than I do now, so I know I would have beat Glenn Wolfe back then.

Q: What do you mean you had more fire in your eye then?

A: Back then, I wanted to have as few fights as I could before I tried to fight for a title or fight somebody in the top 10. But my father said I wasn't really ready for that. I took his word for it.

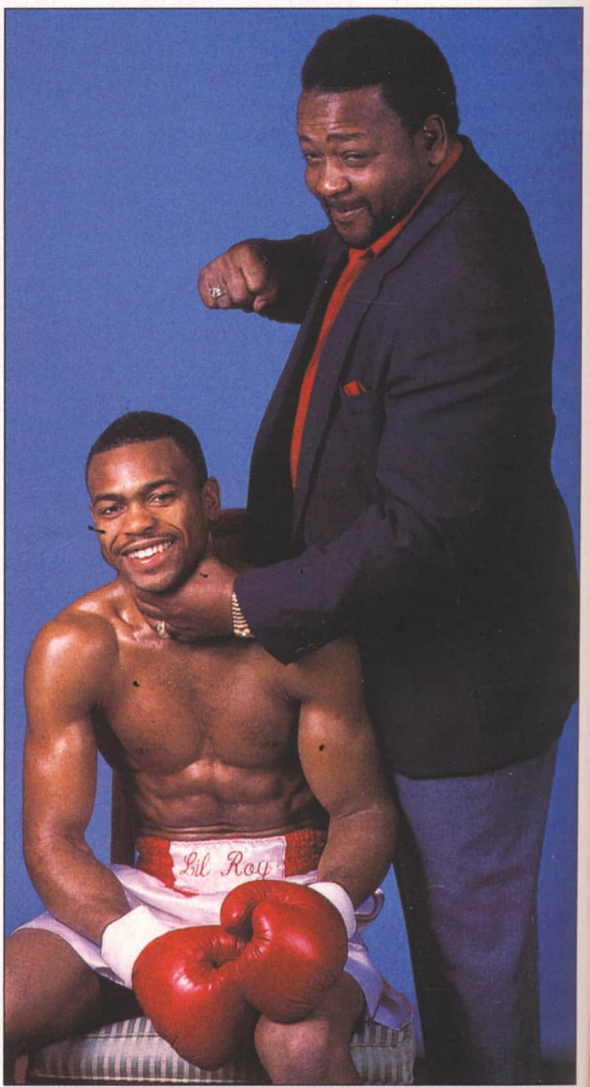
Q: Should you have been a champion already?

A: I should be champion already. But it's gonna come to me anyway, so I have no complaints.

Q: How much contact do Roy Jones Jr. and Roy Jones Sr. have these days?

A: Not much at all.

Q: Is it true that when you call your mom, and your dad answers, you and him barely say hello?



Jones Sr. and Jr. have had many tense moments during their professional and personal relationship. (This was not one of them.) "Fathers think that because they raised you, they can run over you their whole life," Roy Jr. complained.

A: Yeah, that's true.

Q: Do you feel bad about that? Does he feel bad about it?

A: I don't feel bad about it. I don't know how he feels about it. I would talk, it's not me that's not being cooperative. If that's how he chooses to be, that's fine with me, I have no problem. When you get to be a man, it's time for a man to break out and go his own way.

Q: This sounds very similar to the relationship between Ken Norton Jr. and Ken Norton Sr. Do you think this is going to last, or is it just a phase you guys are going through?

A: Well, to be honest, I think it'll last. It hasn't gotten better with [the Nortons], and I can't see it getting any better here, either.

Q: Why don't father-son relationships in boxing ever work out?

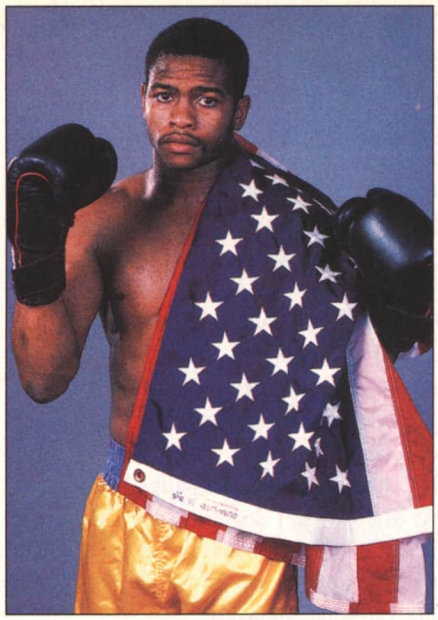
A: When you're a boxer, in order to be a champion you gotta feel like you're a champion. And in order to feel like you're a champion, you gotta feel like you can go head to head in combat with any man in the world and come out on top. That's any man in the world, even your father or uncle. Often in that father-son relationship, you find yourself head to head with your father. You can't let him have his way with you and beat you every time, no matter if it's just a little argument about a coffee table being moved to a certain spot. You can't just sit back and let him run over you 'cause if you do, man, you're gonna feel that the next guy can run over you, too. It kills your confidence.

So you start to put your foot down and say, "Hold it." You start out as a little small nothin', then you grow into a bump, then you grow into a molehill, then you grow into a mountain. Once you get to be a mountain, people shouldn't be able to run over you anymore. They have to go around you. Fathers think that, because they raised you, they can run over you their whole life. That's not gonna happen.

Q: Knowing the history of those relationships, why do so many fathers and sons still get lured into the trap?

A: My father taught me boxing in the beginning, and he taught me better than anybody you could ever think of. I just took it as far as I could have possibly taken it. Until something don't work, I'm gonna stay with it. It stopped working, so I had to go somewhere else.

Q: You are looking at two options for a title shot: meeting Bernard Hopkins for the vacant IBF crown, or challenging WBC champion Julian Jackson when you become the mandatory contender soon. Which way do you lean?



Wrapped proudly in the red, white, and blue during training for the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Jones was intent on bringing the gold back home. After being robbed by the judges and seeing the medal go to South Korean Park Si Hun, Jones "cried for like two days."

A: Probably toward Hopkins.

Q: Why is that?

A: Well, it's on a 50-50 basis. The title is vacant, so if it goes to purse bids, we get a 50-50 split. I think Hopkins has a better chance fighting me for a title that neither of us own than he would fighting me for a title I already hold. When I win it, it's gonna give me an extra aura. I'll be standing a little higher on that hill, and I'll be even more difficult to beat.

Q: So Hopkins should consider himself lucky to get a crack at you now and not later?

A: He should, but fighting me at any time isn't too good for him.

Q: Does the fear of being bound promotionally to Don King make you shy away from facing Jackson?

A: In a way it does, and in a way it doesn't. I don't really fear being tied up to Don King, it's just that I like to know everything that's going on with my career. Being with him, that would be hard to do.

Q: Isn't Jones-Hopkins the kind of matchup of young talents that should be delayed until more interest builds?

A: Truthfully, it probably could be delayed. But, damn, Jones is tired of waiting. Jones wants a title, no matter who he has to beat. Maybe Jones-Hopkins will turn out to be a super fight, and it will come up again. Maybe after Jones is champion, the rematch will be twice as good as the first one. But Roy Jones wants that fight now.

Q: Is it true that your *silver medal* is not on display in your home?

A: It is not on display in my home. I think it's at my mother's house, and it's not on display at her house, either. It's in a closet or something.

Q: Why is that?

A: It doesn't really mean anything.

Q: Even though you were robbed in the Olympic finals, a silver medal—any medal—is still a great accomplishment, isn't it?

A: Not to me.

Q: Elaborate.

A: It's just not an accomplishment. It was an accomplishment for me to get to the Olympics, but the silver medal is settling for second-best. That's like trying for a pro title, losing, and saying, "I'm still the number-one contender." That's settling for second-best. I wouldn't do that.

Q: One line of thinking is that you were robbed against Park Si Hun in the Olympics because the South Koreans wanted revenge for the bad scoring they received at the L.A. Games in '84. Do you think that's the case?

A: Truthfully, I don't know, and I don't really care. It's done and over with.

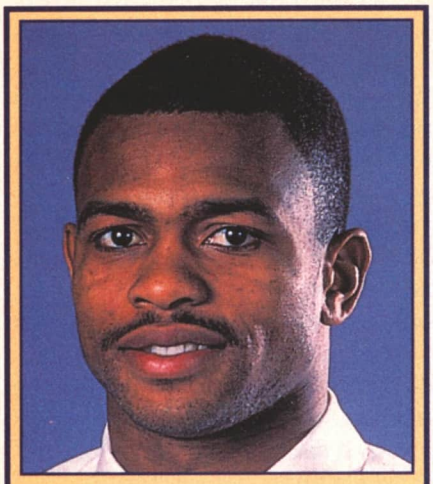
Q: How long did you dwell on it after it happened?

A: About a month.

Q: What finally enabled you to push it out of your mind?

A: The first two days were the hardest. After I was home awhile, and I saw how all the people appreciated how I handled myself in my situation, I realized it wasn't really a failure. It was kind of a blessing in disguise. Then I decided to go around preaching to kids and different people that just because something doesn't go your way, that doesn't mean you have to give up. What kind of example would I be setting if I gave up? That's what really brought me back. I didn't forget about it, but I sucked it up and said, "Just because I lost the gold medal, that doesn't mean I can't be a world champ."

Q: How did you react in private. Were you crying? Were you throwing things?



"I don't care what my opponent thinks. I can be in one of the toughest fights of my life, and if I feel like showboating, I'm gonna showboat."

A: I didn't throw things around, I just cried. I cried for like two days.

Q: When you were in Seoul, did you have any sense that you or your teammates might be victimized?

A: Not that bad. I felt that if the fights were close, we wouldn't get the decision, but if you beat a guy as bad as I beat my guy, you would still get the decision.

Q: When that final bell sounded, then, you weren't fearful?

A: Not at first. But when I saw the way the Koreans were acting, I knew without a doubt what had happened. At this little table where the judges' cards went to after the fight, they were jumping up and down and screaming before the decision was announced. The referee said to me, "There's no way possible." I said, "No, they got me." I put my hand on my hip and listened to the lady announcing the decision, and I still couldn't believe she was gonna say his name. Then she said, "The winner on points, 3-2 ... " And I said, "Damn, how could this be true?" I couldn't believe it.

Q: Did Park Si Hun ever say anything to you?

A: I had an interpreter ask him if he thought he really won the fight, and he said, "No." He knew he didn't win the fight. I never blamed him. If he thought he won, then I really would have felt bad about it. But when he admitted that, it cleared him of everything. I didn't hold anything against him. It wasn't his fault. He could have given the medal back, but people don't do stuff like that.

Q: Quite often, you hold your hands low, shuffle your feet, and showboat, and you haven't seemed to have much respect for anyone you've fought. Who do you respect at middleweight?

A: I respect everybody I fight. It may seem like I don't show respect, but I respect all my opponents.

Q: Then why the showboating?

A: The crowd. I don't care what my opponent thinks. I can be in one of the toughest fights of my life, and if I feel like showboating, I'm gonna showboat.

Q: In your pro debut, you did an "Ali Shuffle" over Ricky Randall when he went down. Isn't that unsportsmanlike behavior?

A: No. It's entertainment. Professional boxing, to me, is not all sports. It's part sports and part entertainment. To be realistic about it, if it's so much of a sport, then why is George Foreman such a big star? It doesn't look like George has much of a chance against Lennox Lewis or Riddick Bowe. If this was just a sport, you know those wouldn't be good fights for George to take. George can't beat them if he couldn't even beat Holyfield. But from an entertainment standpoint, people want to see George get up there and square off with those guys. That's because they like George's personality and all the talking he does. People love George. George is making a lot more money now than when he was a real terror in the ring.

Q: Every time you showboat, you probably get one person saying, "I want to see this guy get leveled," for every person who says, "I like this kid."

A: *(Smiles)* As long as I'm picking up two fans.

Q: Is there anyone who bothers you with their attitude.

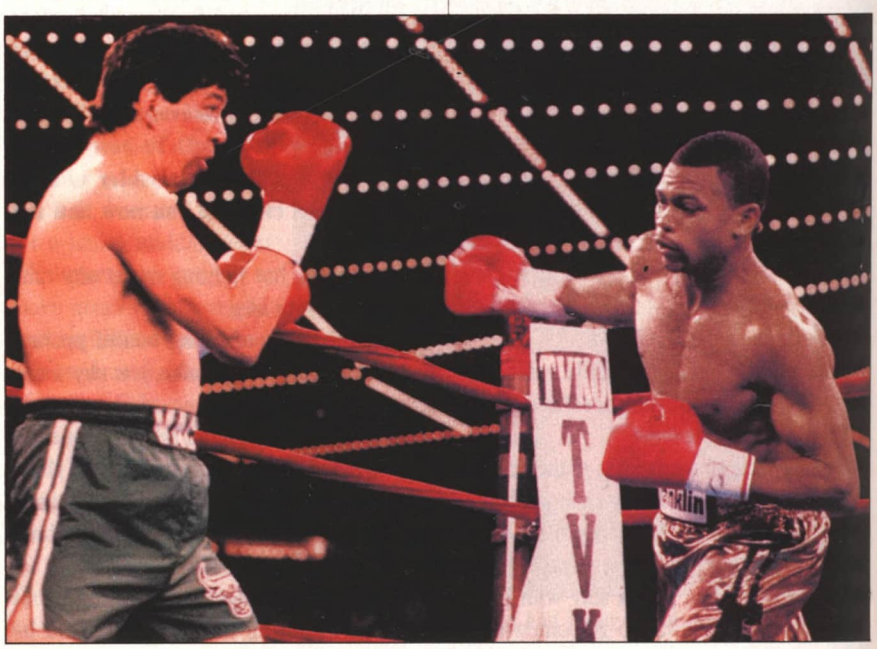
A: [James] Toney used to, but he's getting to be a better sport than he used to be. But he had an attitude at one time that I didn't like. He got on TV and would be cursing. There are little kids watching that stuff. They idolize people they see on television. You don't do things like that. It's a bad example.

Q: Why is it so important to win a middleweight title before you move up and challenge Toney at 168 pounds?

A: The middleweight title is more prestigious right now. Someday maybe the super middleweight title will have as much prestige because a lot more good fighters are gonna be moving to super middleweight. I really want to win as many titles as I possibly can.

Q: We'll name some potential opponents, and you give us your impressions of them. Start with Julian Jackson.

A: Good fighter, tough puncher. Both of us are knockout experts, but I'm just a little bit better knockout expert than he is.



In his New York City debut, Jones unleashed a blistering attack and knocked out former WBC welterweight titlist Jorge Vaca in one round in January '92.

Q: Toney.

A: Very good boxer. Me and him would create a very good fight because of our styles. Toney's very tough and a real sharp puncher. It would be an excellent fight.

Q: Reggie Johnson.

A: Southpaw, which always creates a problem for a right-hander. A good craftsman.

Q: Terry Norris.

A: Very quick puncher, powerful puncher. Probably has better head movement than any of the others. Kinda small, though. So against me, it would be tough for him.

Q: Were you always cocky—are you like that in day-to-day life—or is it a side of you that only boxing has brought out?

A: Boxing kind of brought it out. I told you, being a boxer, you have to have a little bit of an attitude. You can't go in the ring acting like a wimp when you want to become king of the ring. It doesn't mix.

Q: You have been compared to Mike Tyson because you possess that devastating blend of speed and power. Some people with strong chins—Jorge Vaca, Glen Wolfe—didn't even last a full round. Is the knockout something you're looking for right at the start?

A: No. I listen to rap music a lot. Dr. Dre has a new tape out, and he says something about doing some "chin-checking." That best describes me. In the first round, I wanna check your chin and see if you can stand up to what I throw. If your chin don't hold up, I'm gonna get you. If the chin does holds up, then I fall back into the outscore-him mode. When I checked Wolfe's chin, it was good. It held up. But when I checked his body, it didn't.

Q: Because of the publicity and opportunities they receive, Olympic champions usually have a head start on the rest of the pack when they turn pro. Oddly, though, fighters who did not win gold medals at their Olympics—Evander Holyfield, Virgil Hill, Riddick Bowe, Roy Jones—have been more successful as pros. Do you have a theory on why that is?

A: Because we didn't get what we thought we deserved in the Olympics, we come out as pros and try harder. Some guys win in the Olympics, and they feel they reached their peak in boxing. They're satisfied. If they go further, fine, and if they don't, that's fine, too. You get a couple that do well, like Pernell Whitaker, Meldrick Taylor, Sugar Ray Leonard, but too many just get satisfied with that medal.

Jones closed out an impressive 1992 campaign by stopping middleweight contender Percy Harris in Atlantic City. Jones dropped Harris four times en route to a fourth-round knockout.

Q: Two years ago, somebody fired shots at your mobile home in Pensacola, Florida, but you weren't at home. Did you ever find out who did it and why?

A: No.

Q: Any guess?

A: When you do big things and have success, you find that people in your hometown tend to get jealous. Regardless of all the sacrifice you made, they still get jealous because you're doing something that they're not doing. They try to get you into conflicts and trouble so they can stop your career. That's why, a lot of times, people move out of their hometowns when they get successful. People feel like, "I went to school the same way he did. Why did he get to be a star?" People should be supporting me. [Dallas Cowboys running back] Emmitt Smith is from Pensacola, and I support him.

Q: Boxing has been looking for its next Sugar Ray Leonard for a long time. Donald Curry was supposed to be that man, then Mark Breland, but they failed to justify those expectations. Has the next Leonard finally been found right in the middleweight division?

A: No, I'm not the next Sugar Ray Leonard, I'm the first Roy Jones. But middleweight is gonna be an exciting division with me in it. There's one thing I want to bring back to the middleweight division, the same thing Marvin Hagler brought to it: Once I get to be champion, I will fight anybody. I don't intend to avoid no one. If you beat me, fine, you beat me. I'll be back for you. But nobody can claim to be the best unless they fight 'em all. That's what Muhammad Ali did, that's what Larry Holmes did, that's what Marvin Hagler did. And that's what Roy Jones will do.

JONES UPDATE

Two months after this interview, Jones decisioned Hopkins to win the vacant IBF middleweight title. Since then he has also captured the IBF super middleweight belt and is currently the world light heavyweight champion. Still, despite his breathtaking talent and 47-1 (38) record, Jones has not become as big a star as he should have, judging by his consistently disappointing pay-per-view numbers. Part of the problem has been the lack of marquee opponents at 175 pounds, but Jones has also been criticized for failing to fight the handful of fighters that just might give him a competitive tussle. His habit of coasting against hopelessly outclassed rivals has also been detrimental to his box office appeal. All that may have changed by the time you read this. As we went to press, Jones was scheduled to challenge WBA heavyweight titlist John Ruiz on March 1, 2003. An impressive win over Ruiz could very well elevate Jones to a new plateau of popularity and acclaim.

RAY MANCINI

"I Know I'm Gonna Be Champion"

RAY MANCINI IS one of the most popular fighters in America. With his boyish looks, polite manner, and whirlwind boxing style, he has become a popular attraction on CBS weekend boxing shows. His October 1981 fight against WBC lightweight champion Alexis Arguello was a ratings bonanza for the network. Although he was stopped by Arguello in the 14th round, Mancini acquitted himself well.

Today, the 21-year-old Mancini is preparing for his second title shot, against WBA lightweight champion Art Frias. Peter King spoke with Mancini from the contender's home in Youngstown, Ohio.

Interview conducted March 1982

Q: You'll be fighting Art Frias for the WBA title on May 8. What do you think of him as a fighter?

A: I think Art Frias is an excellent fighter. He's the world champion, what can you say? I think he's an aggressive kid. Very aggressive fighter. He's physically strong, but he's not a big puncher. I think he's crude. I don't think he's too polished. What he doesn't have in polish and ring skill, he makes up for with desire, determination, and pride. He's a proud champion. And he's a hungry fighter. But I feel I'm the better fighter. I also feel he's a one-handed fighter. He depends on the right hand too much.

Q: What do you think of his tactics? In his last few fights he's been accused of butting.

A: I've only seen him against [Claude] Noel and [Ernesto] Espana. He's an aggressive fighter, he's coming in, he's laying his head on your chest and trying to throw punches. I don't think he's a dirty fighter or anything like that. I'm an aggressive fighter, too. A lot of times I lay my head on the guy's chest. I don't try to butt a man. I don't know if he does. I'm not saying if he does or he doesn't. When we fight, it's going to be a hard fight. We're both going to be in there moving our heads around a lot. And if he tries to butt me, I hope the referee does his job.

Q: Did he impress you in his defense against Espana?

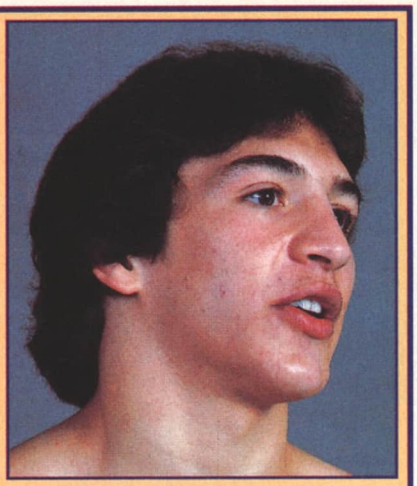
A: He impressed me that he was in good, good shape. He was very, very aggressive. He was strong throughout the fight. He was wearing Espana down. I think he was leading in the fight, but it was very close. It took him a few rounds to figure out Espana. But I feel he was coming on. I think eventually he would have stopped Espana.

Q: Do you think they should have stopped it when they did?

A: I don't know. I've heard a lot of things, that it wasn't a butt, it was uppercuts [that opened the cut under Frias' eye]. I haven't really seen the replay of it. But a lot of people are saying it was a butt, not an uppercut. If that's the case, then they were right to stop it. He was bleeding pretty bad, see? I think the referee might have done him a favor. If they would have kept going, he would've split his eye open more. Then he really would have been messed up. That might have turned the fight around.

Q: Do you worry about things like that? You have a tendency to bleed

MANCINI
Boom
Boom



"I may box and I may slug. It depends on how the fight goes, according to what Frias does. Whatever he does, I'm going to have something for him."

from the nose. Do you ever wonder that the doctor might act too quickly in stopping one of your fights?

A: No, I'm not worried about that at all. First, the nose is really no problem. It's just a few weak blood vessels. Since the last fight, it has healed up real good. It bled a little bit last fight, it's healing up now. But it's just weak blood vessels, and it's very sensitive. The doctor told me I'll need an operation on it eventually. It'll force me to lay off for six months, which I can't afford to do now. It won't be enough to stop a fight. It won't cause breathing impairment or anything. It won't be a steady flow either, coming gushing out. It gets better after every fight. It always heals up. I'm not worried about it at all.

Q: What is your mental state entering the Frias fight? Will having fought Arguello help you against Frias?

A: Right now, I feel after May 8, I will be world champion. There's not a doubt in my mind. I know I'm gonna be champion. I just feel that I'm the better fighter. I put my shots together, I'm a hard puncher, and I'm the stronger fighter. I think I'm the better all-round fighter. I just feel in all aspects of the game, I'm the better fighter. It's my title. I'm gonna get this guy.

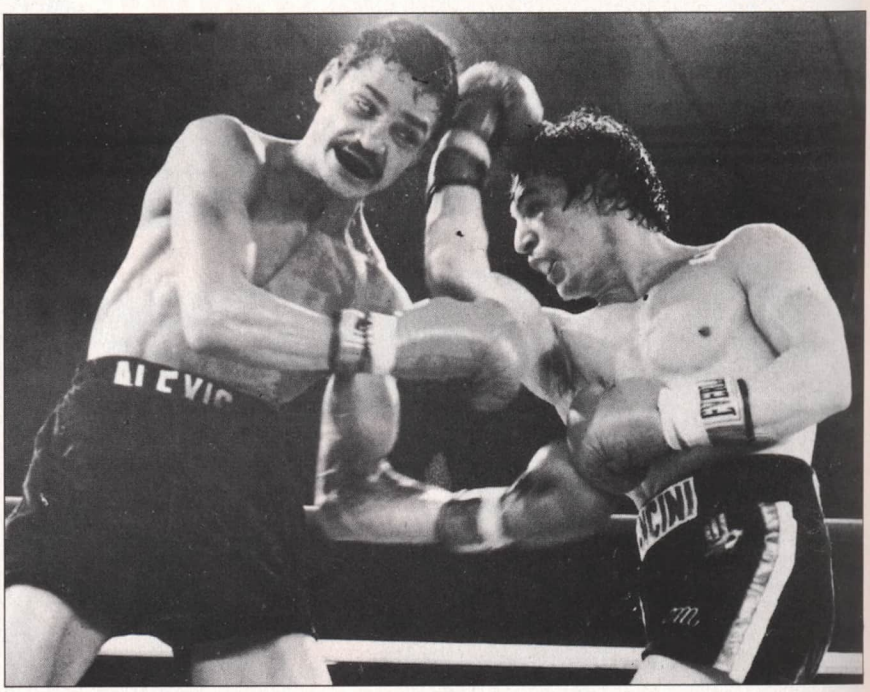
As far as the feeling after going in against Arguello, it's confidence just being in there with the man and taking his best shots. I still got up. I didn't lay down. I learned a lot about myself in that fight when I got dropped after the 12th. I came back. I didn't lose faith, I didn't lose hope. I said, "Don't worry about it, I'm gonna come back, I'm gonna get this guy. I'm gonna finish this fight on my feet. I'm gonna get this guy." I still felt I could come back and get him. I didn't feel I was that far behind anyhow. I felt it was very tight. I felt I was leading. But whatever the case may be, it was still a strong fight. He wasn't way ahead of me or nothing. It was just a rough and tough fight, and I thought I could turn it around. So that fight taught me a lot about myself.

Q: Before the fight, did you ever think about what you would do, how you would react if Arguello knocked you down?

A: Absolutely. I think every fighter wonders, *what if this happens?* Every fighter has a fear. Not of the opponent, but of not knowing what is going to happen.

Q: Most fighters won't admit to that fear.

A: I think every fighter has that fear. It makes him more aware in there. You know, you don't want to get hit with that shot. It makes you sharper. I thought about what would happen if I got dropped, what I would do. If I went down, if I got cut, if I got hurt, what would I do? I always felt that if I got hurt, I could come back strong. I'd fire back at the guy. In this case, though, the first time I got dropped was at the end of the round, so I went back to the corner and they told me not to worry about the offense, just to get myself together. Keep my hands up, move, and clear myself. Which I did. If you watch the 13th round of the fight, I didn't throw a whole lot of punches. But still I was catching a lot of punches. I got blown out that round, he almost took me out of there. In the 14th round, I went back to moving in and out. I felt I was doing better moving in and out. If you watch the 14th, I feel I was outpunching him in the beginning. I was coming in, banging him, hitting him with good shots, moving out. I think I was fighting back pretty good. I just happened to get caught with a hook, and that was it. He stopped me in my tracks. But up to that point I was fine. Now I know what would happen. I can take the hard punches of any man. It may happen again, who knows. I may get hit with



Mancini was able to land occasionally against all-time great Arguello when they met in October '81, but was clearly not ready for a fighter that caliber.

Mancini would suffer knockdowns in the fourth and 14th rounds before the WBC title fight was stopped. Boom Boom's dream of winning the title for his father would have to be put on hold.

those shots again. But I know one thing: I'll always be there at the end.

Q: Frias can't hit as hard or box as well as Arguello can. Against Frias, you say you can hit harder and box better. Do you intend to box him or slug with him?

A: Right now I don't know what the plan is. My trainer, Murphy Griffith, is going to plan things out for me. He is a great strategist. He's very confident for this fight. Frias ain't gonna do something without me doing something back to him. I may box and I may slug. It depends on how the fight goes, according to what Frias does. Whatever he does, I'm going to have something for him.

Q: If Murphy suggests that you fight a little bit out of your character, that you box a little bit more and move a little bit more, will you still feel confident?

A: Absolutely. Griff will tell me that for a reason. We will do that because we know we will eventually catch him. If Murph wants me to move in the beginning and just box him and let him be the aggressor, fine. That's good with me because it's 15 rounds. I've been longer distances than he has. I'll be in great shape.

Q: You're trying for the WBA title this time. You have to realize that most people—boxing fans, TV viewers, the media—recognize Arguello as the true champion. If you win the WBA title, will you be a legitimate champion, or will it merely be a springboard toward Arguello again?

A: No, no, no. I win the WBA title—it *is* a legitimate title. Isn't it legitimate *(laughs)?* I think it is. I hope it is! I mean, naturally people are going to say Arguello beat me, so if I'm the WBA champion and he beat me, people are going to recognize him as the champion. My view is that he did beat me, but the WBA has a championship also. There are two factions. Now I'm [going to be] the champ of the WBA, and I'm gonna be proud of that. I'm gonna be a true champion. I hope eventually we can unify the title. I always wanted a rematch with Arguello because I feel I can beat him. Even more so now after being in there with him.

Q: After 10 rounds against Arguello, you were ahead on the scorecards. Do you think it was a case of you losing the fight more than him winning it?

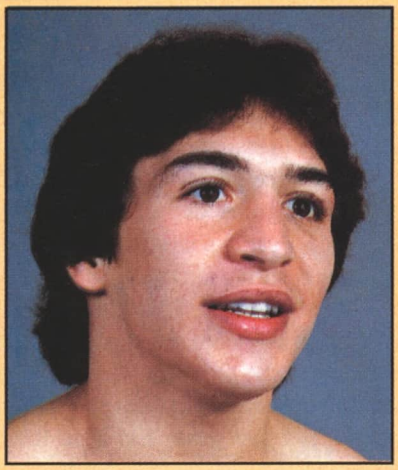
A: I'm not gonna say I lost it. But I did get away from my fight plan. I started getting away from what I was supposed to be doing. Why? There's a lot of questions I ask myself. I felt at that point I was doing better where I was at. People say I should have been on top of him, I should have been closer, but they don't realize I was getting hit with shots that were hurting me. Though I was standing up to him, I was getting hit with a lot of shots in there. And I felt by moving out on him I was doing better. I was banging him better and I was making him miss. Evidently, I was wrong. Griff told me he wanted me to start pouring it on and stay close. He's the man who knows. He can see what's going on. I'm only in the fight, and I can't see anything. He can, and he was telling me to stay close. Now I know he was right. I think I shouldn't have given Arguello the room he needed. But he won the fight. He hit me. It was his punches that turned things around. If I just gave it to him, that's one thing. But he hit me. He hurt me with those shots, so he won the fight. By getting away from my plan, I lessened my chances of winning the title. His shots were the ones that did everything, not me.

Q: Against Frias, how can you prevent making those mistakes?

A: Well, if you go by my last couple of fights, I've done exactly what Griff's told me to do. I've stuck to the fight plan. I've learned from the Arguello fight and my last two fights (against Manuel Abedoy and Diablito Valdez). Those mistakes I won't make again. But I'm not a robot. I'm not programmed to do one thing, and if it doesn't work, then just keep doing it. I am a fighter, and I'll go according to schedule. That's it. But if I feel I can do something better, I'll come back and talk to Griff. "I think I can get to the guy with this," or "I'd be better off doing this." Then he can say, "Okay," or maybe he'll say, "No, no." We're a team. We both work. I'm not a robot where he programs me to do only one thing.

Q: Against Diablito Valdez you followed the fight plan pretty well and it paid off. You kept the pressure on and you knocked him out. But you got hit a lot in that fight. Did you get hit a little bit more than you should have?

A: Well, he did hit me with some good shots, but that didn't upset me. I don't think I got hit with any sucker shots. Those are the shots that get you upset. It was another rough, tough fight. This guy was such a cutie that eventually he was gonna trick you into something and then he was going to hit you. But eventually, persistence is going to pay off. If I make a mistake and he counters me and catch-



"I never was a nice guy and never will be a nice guy in the ring. How nice can you be when a man's trying to rip your head off?"

es me, I'm still coming in and he's backing up. I got hit a lot of shots. But it doesn't upset me because I know my style combined with his, I was bound to get hit with some shots. But if you watch the fight, I didn't get hit with as many shots as you think I did. I was bobbing and weaving and catching a lot on the gloves. I was moving my head.

Q: You've really captured the imagination of the American fight fan. You know the Arguello fight received very high TV ratings. People are interested in you. You've evoked their emotions. Do you feel undue pressure at such a young age you have to act a certain way at all times?

A: No, not at all. I was brought up to be a gentleman. That's no act. That's not because I'm a fighter on TV. I was always brought up to be a gentleman. And my parents did a good job. The way I am is a reflection on them. Being in the public eye helped. It helped me to learn how to be a gentleman. I always felt I was a gentleman in the first place, no matter what I did. I feel no pressure as far as the public goes. It's very flattering to have the public want to watch me. That's great. They're paying good money to see me, and I don't want to be in a rotten fight. But I don't feel any pressure. The pressure was winning the title for my father. I felt a lot of it before the Arguello fight. But now I'm learning to push it off.

Q: What did your dad say to you immediately after the Arguello fight?

A: When I got into the dressing room I just cried on his shoulder and said, "Dad. I m sorry I didn't get it for you." And he said, "That's all right." He comforted me like a father would. He comforted me and said, "That's okay. You'll be back." That's all I needed to hear. I just wanted to get it for him. To my family and friends, win, lose, or draw, I'm the champ, so I don't have to go out there and prove anything. I was disappointed, but I'm champ to them, and that's all that matters to me. But I want that title for my father. That's what I was so hurt about. He knew that everything would turn out okay later.

Q: How did Youngstown act when you came back after the fight?

A: I tell you, these people are the greatest. They're the best people in the world. They may have a shortage of a lot of things right now as far as economics are concerned, but as far as good people, you can't beat them. They treated me like I was the world champion. If I could ever be a winner by losing, this was it. They came back with more faith than ever. They tell me, "We know you're gonna get it. We're so proud of you." And it made me want to cry. It really choked me up.

Q: You're only 20, yet you have great responsibilities on your shoulders. Does this ever become a burden? Do you ever have the urge to do things other less restricted 20-year-olds do?

A: Of course, of course. A lot of things have happened to me. I'll be 21 soon, and it's like 21 going on 31. The fight game matures you. You have to be a man for this game, because it's not a kid's game. Being in the fight game, with the responsibilities you have to fulfill, makes you a man. It builds character. It made me a strong person. I still do things that other 20-year-olds do. When I'm between fights I like to go out, too. I've done more than most 20-year-olds.

Mancini and Arguello's display of sportsmanship both during and after the fight was played out for an appreciative national television audience.

After taking a few more shots than expected, Mancini overpowered Diablito Valdez and knocked him out in the 10th round. With decisive wins over Manuel Abedoy and Valdez following his defeat to Alexis Arguello, Mancini felt he was ready for a second chance at the title, against WBA beltholder Art Frias.

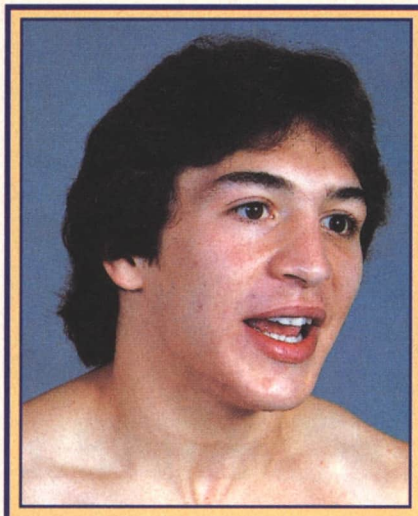
I've done more than 30-year-olds by traveling, getting to be on TV, meeting people, things like that. So I feel fortunate. I thank God for everything, and I don't feel left out.

Q: You have a reputation as being a nice guy, and in the ninth round of the Arguello fight, after the two of you clashed heads, you stopped fighting and apologized to him. I'm sure you've heard a lot about that from your trainer and your father. Would you do that again?

A: I heard a lot about that from my trainer, but mostly from my father. He said, "I would have been on him like a porcupine" I tried to tell him, "Dad, you weren't there in the situation." As far as the Valdez fight, people said to me, "I'm glad to see you weren't a nice guy, that you learned." Hey, man, I was never a nice guy in that ring! I ain't no nice guy when I get in there. It was a different situation with Arguello. Valdez was not down. People said, "You should have hit him." Damn right I should have hit him! He wasn't down yet. How would it look if he came back? My job is to get the guy down, same as Arguello's was to get me down. I didn't apologize to Arguello. We hit heads. And he moaned. He went, "*Ohhh, Ohhhhhh*," and pulled back. It would have been different if it was a situation where I hit him and he backed off—I would have jumped right on him. But he moaned, and the first instinct is pull back. If it happened again, I'd have to say no, I wouldn't pull back. I learned from that, because I let him off the hook. I could have hit him and turned things around, but it would have been wrong. But I'm also not positive that I made a mistake. At that time, it was just human instinct. Hey, I can't apologize for not being a nice guy. I never was a nice guy and never will be a nice guy in the ring. How nice can you be when a man's trying to take your head off? How much of a gentleman can you be?

Q: Some fighters have to feel hatred toward their opponent before the fight. They have to build it up. Others can wait until the bell rings. Would you be at your best if you have to knock out a man who you personally like or admire? Or can you completely turn it off when the bell rings?

A: I think that Alexis made a statement that puts it into perspective. He said, "I can't go in there and worry about the man. I have to do my job." And that's exactly it. If I like the man, that's fine. But when we get in there, I do the job. When we get in there we're gonna try to kill one another. If I hate the man, I can't take that into the ring either because the man might con you and try to be nice. Valdez was a gentleman. I had a lot of respect for him before

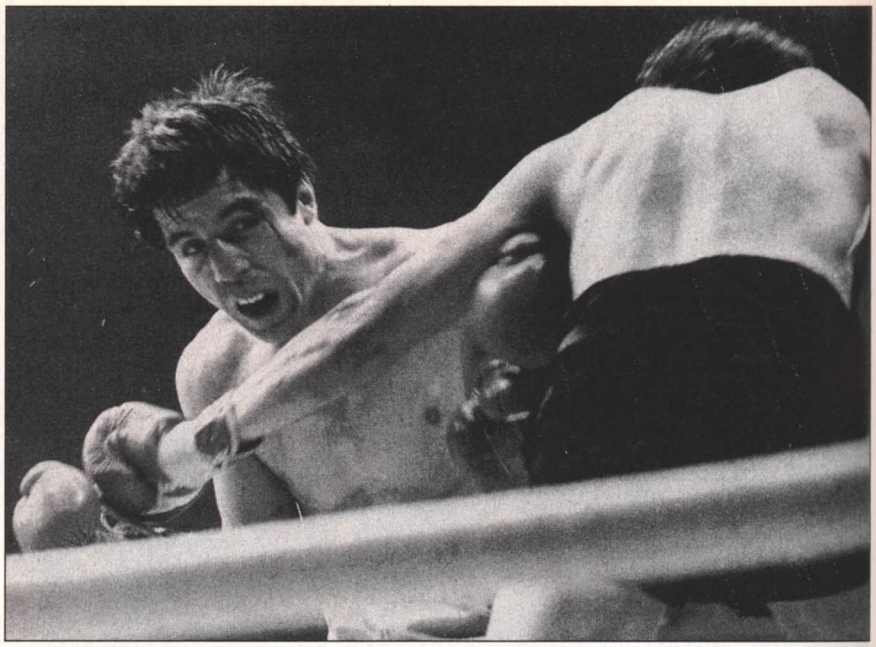


"And now I'm going after another title. I'm, the better fighter. I know I'm gonna beat this guy. After I win the title, people will say he was ready for the championship. I have only one statement for people who say I wasn't ready for Arguello: Ask my father how many title shots you get."

the fight. He said to me, "How you doing, champ?" But all I'm saying is that it was a job.

Q: You were never considered a great amateur. Now you're one of the top lightweights in the world. How has Murphy Griffith helped? What has turned it all around?

A: Murphy Griffith is one of the greatest trainers in the world. He and I are very, very tight. We're like good friends, best friends. He felt right off the bat that I wouldn't be able to make the Olympics. I didn't have an amateur style. What he saw was a championship-quality professional fighter. He felt I had the fighting stuff to be a good professional prospect. Griff has added to my repertoire of punches and different things to my style. He's taught me the art of defense and several tricks. He told me, "I know you can fight. That's not what I'm worried about. If you couldn't, you wouldn't be here. I'm just going to show you the tricks and techniques to get over on the guy." And that's what it's all about, tricks and techniques. He's been in the game for 42 years. He's bound to learn something, right? To me, Griff is the greatest. I wouldn't have anybody else. He's gonna help me to that title, and I'm gonna give him his first world champion.



Frias did his part by surviving a spirited challenge from Ernesto Espana before winning a ninth-round technical decision in Los Angeles in January '82.

Q: Your manager, Dave Wolf, received a lot of bad press because of two of his fighters, Too Tall Jones and Duane Bobick. How do you view Wolf as a manager?

A: Dave Wolf is an excellent manager. I think he made me known to the public and the press long before I was on TV. I think you'll have to agree with that. And he does his job and dearly cares about me. He does his job completely. He's always looking out for my welfare, trying to get the little edges in the fight. The guy fights for me. It's like the coach of a baseball team, guys like Tommy Lasorda. He's got to fight for the team. That's what he's done for me. And that's what I love about him. He's been a big plus. As far as the bad press, [they] always knock the manager. I think Duane Bobick was an excellent fighter. He had great potential to be champion. But [Wolf] had nothing to do when Bobick goes in there and freezes. And Bobick froze against Norton. He had problems, and he wasn't mentally prepared. That's not Dave's fault. Dave did good. He got him right in line for a title shot. As far as Too Tall, what if he had taken on another manager, like Angelo Dundee or Bennie Georgino? Would [the media] have knocked them and said they're terrible managers? They have had 99 other champs, but the press would've said this was one guy who didn't make it. Dave took on the challenge, and I respect the man for trying to take a man coming out of one sport and make him a champion. He received a lot of flak, but I think he did a great job. He tried. Too Tall just didn't have what it takes to be a professional fighter. I think Too Tall realized he didn't have it.

Q: A lot of fighters don't mature until their late-20s. How do you respond to the critics who claim you're being moved too fast?

A: I don't feel like I've matured yet either. But by beating top contenders and being championship material, that's beautiful. That's what it's all about. There's no set age in the fight game when you're ready to fight for the title. When [Wilfredo] Benitez was 17, was he ready? If he lost, he wasn't ready. If I beat Arguello, I was ready. If I didn't beat him, I'm not ready. I feel I'm ready for the title right now. I beat the number-six contender, the number-three

Mancini gives all credit to his parents for molding him into the type of person he was (top). He had the utmost respect for his manager, Dave Wolf, and his trainer, Murphy Griffith (above).

contender, where was I gonna go? We had the momentum, we kept it, and we went right after Arguello. I went after the man, not someone that nobody heard of. And now I'm going after another title. I'm the better fighter. I know I'm gonna beat this guy. After I win the title, people will say he was ready for the championship. I only have one statement for people who say I wasn't ready for Arguello: Ask my father how many title shots you get.

Q: You have to take them when you get them.

A: Exactly. We had the shot, so we took it. The first thing people say is why didn't you wait? Why didn't you hold out? Why didn't you go after [Sean] O'Grady? First of all, I couldn't get a shot against O'Grady. I don't tell them when I want the shot, they tell me. They think you can tell them when you want it, when you're ready. Take it when you get it. If I didn't take it then, I may have never got the shot. I might have had to wait another two or three years.

Q: How long do you want to keep fighting?

A: When I turned pro at 18, I told my father I would fight 10 years, until I'm 28. My father told me long ago that no matter who you are, even if you're an active fighter, you start going downhill when you're 28. People say, look at this guy. He's fighting and he's 38. And I say, yeah, but look at him when he was 25. He ain't the same now. I don't care who you are, you're always gonna slow down. I'd like to retire as champ. I'm not giving it a certain amount of time. But I'm not looking for it to be six, eight, 10 years. I'm looking forward to getting back to my family. I'm tired of being away from my family. That's the hardest part. The strain, the physical pain, I can take all that, but being away from my family is the hardest thing in the world. I want to be home with them and be around to take care of them. That's what I'm hoping for. God willing, I'll get the title, make a few good paydays, be set, and get out in a couple of years. That's what I'm hoping for.

MANCINI UPDATE

A first-round blowout of Frias earned Mancini the WBA lightweight belt and further increased his status as one of the most popular and marketable fighters of the time. Tragedy struck in his second defense when South Korean challenger Duk Koo Kim died as a result of the beating he absorbed before the fight was stopped in the 14th round. Mancini made two more successful defenses before being stopped by Livingstone Bramble in June 1984. He retired after failing to regain the title in a rematch, but returned for a comeback fight in March '89, losing a 12-round decision to Hector Camacho, and then lost another comeback bout in April '92 to Greg Haugen, ending his career with a 29-5 (23) record. Mancini became an actor after quitting the ring, appearing in more than 20 movies and television shows. He has also worked as a TV commentator.

MUHAMMAD ALI

"I Will Be Greater Than All The Athletes In The World!"

ON THE NIGHT of March 31, Muhammad Ali watched four hours of boxing on television. The next day, the headlines belonged to fighters by the names of Leonard, Gregory, Weaver, and Holmes. But Ali's name quickly resurfaced. Where did "The Greatest" fit into the confusing, bizarre heavyweight picture?

Our Peter King spoke with Ali from the three-time heavyweight champion's home in Los Angeles. The conversation ranged from Ali's reasons for his return to his chances against today's champions and contenders. We will soon see whether Ali can still perform miracles in the ring. But one thing is certain: His mouth has never been in better shape.

Interview conducted April 1980

Q: Muhammad, the question everyone wants answered is, simply, why are you making a comeback?

A: To be the four-time world heavyweight champion.

Q: Four times? You're not satisfied with just three?

A: No. Four times is much greater. Only Floyd Patterson regained it once. But four times is just great. Super great! To win four times would be great. It would mean I'd break my record. And then win it five times.

Q: You once said you never wanted to end up like Joe Louis did when he made a comeback at ...

A: I never said that. I wouldn't say that about Joe, embarrass the man like that. I don't think I'd ever say that.

Q: Well, it was reported that you did say that. Were you sorry to see Tate lose?

A: Yeah. I thought I could've knocked him out. I could've gotten the credit for that.

Q: Could Mike Weaver knock you out with a punch like that?

A: I don't think so. Joe Frazier hits twice as hard. Ken Norton hits much harder. George Foreman hits so much harder. I'm known for taking punches. I'll never get knocked out.

Q: Do you consider Weaver a power-puncher?

A: Well, he hits harder than Holmes.

Q: How are you going to fight Mike Weaver?

A: The same Ali style. Be a step ahead of him. Whole lot of dancin', whole lot of runnin'. He don't move fast. He never charges, never crouches. All you have to do is stand there straight and punch him. Move in and move out, that's all.

Q: How long will the fight last?

A: I don't know. I don't want to make no prediction. But I'm sure I'll stop him. I'm four-time champion already.

Q: You mean you're going to be four-time champion.

A: No, I'm as good as four-time champion already. Then five times. I want Holmes two months after Weaver.

Q: On a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the best, where would you rate Mike Weaver?

A: Seven.

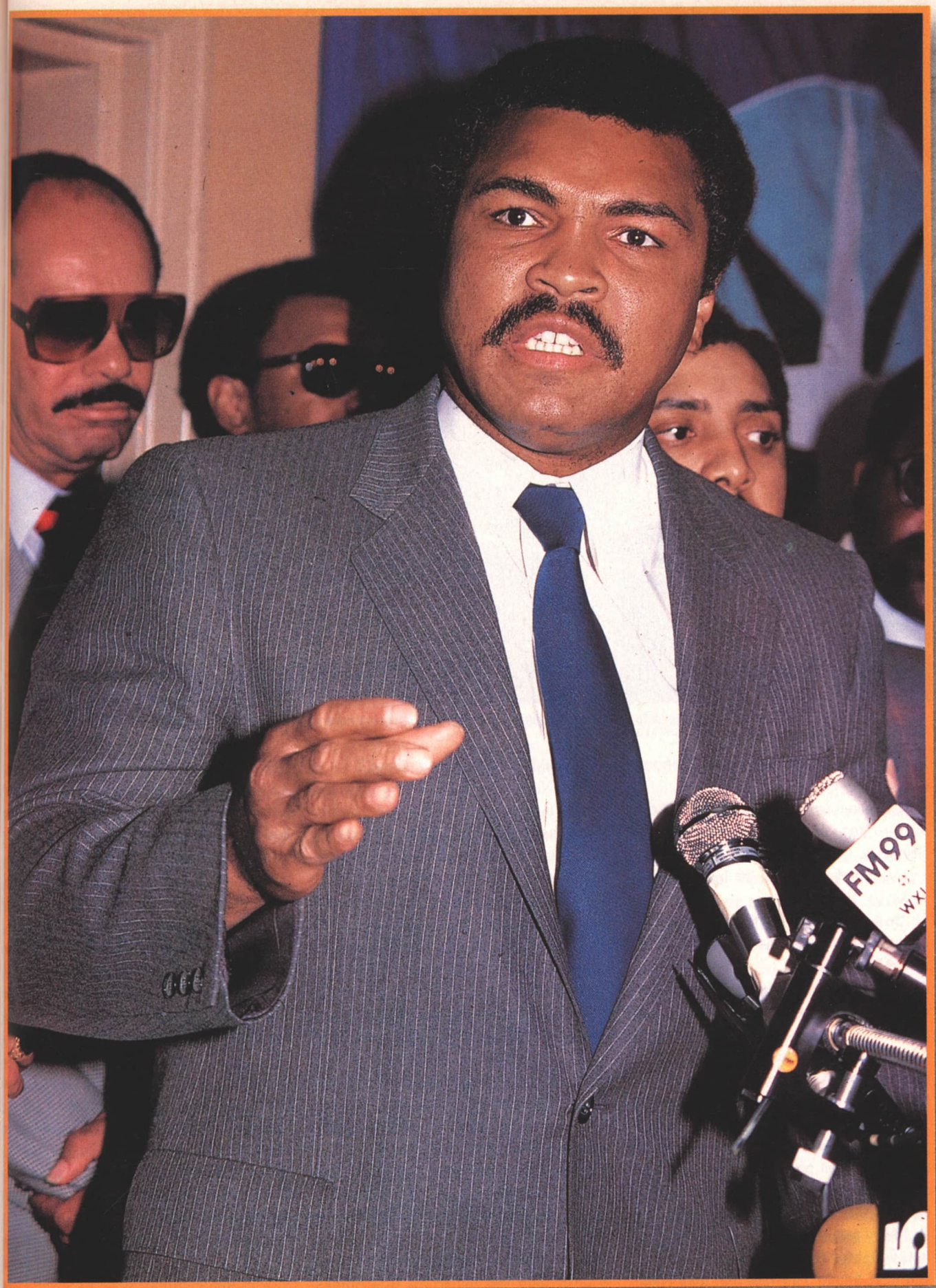
Q: How about Larry Holmes?

A: Eight.

Q: And Muhammad Ali?

A: Ten-and-a-half.

Q: Does the fact that you may receive less money to fight Weaver compared to what you would have gotten had you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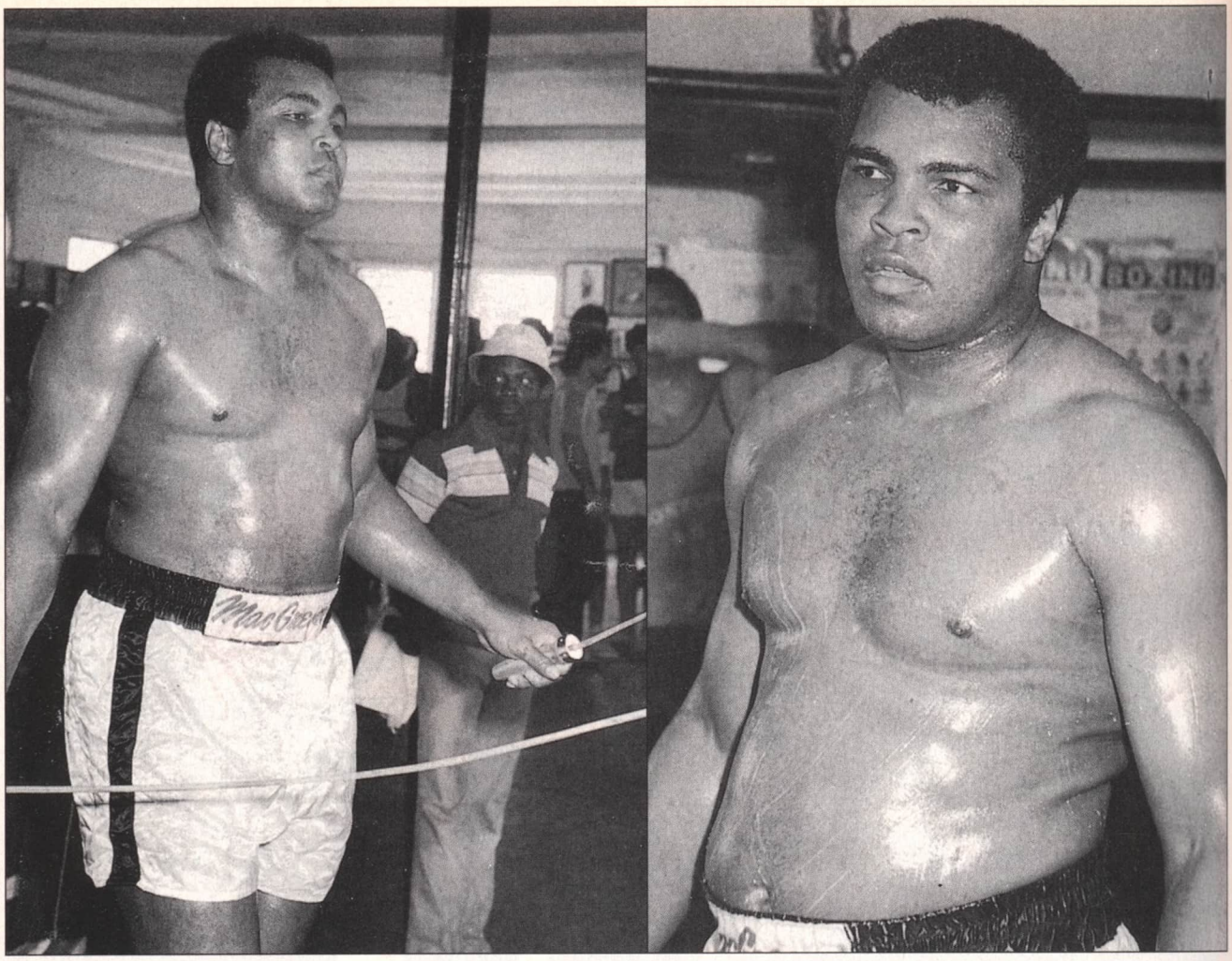


Ali skips rope to try to get back into fighting shape, but he'd obviously have to skip some meals as well.

fought Tate affect your comeback plans?

A: The purse isn't that interesting. What I want to do is be four-time heavyweight champion. I want the record. It will be the greatest sports record in the history of the world.

Q: Do you think an Ali-Weaver fight is as attractive to the fans as an Ali-Tate fight would have been?

A: Yeah, because whoever it is, if I'm involved it's attractive. But what's so good about this is he's got the power to stop a man with one punch. That's what they'll be comin' to see. Can Weaver knock out Ali? Eleven years younger. That's a long time. Ali is old at 38. Off a year-and-half, almost two years by fight time. Can he do it? Tate didn't have a knockout punch. Weaver might land that punch. Will that punch hit Ali? Can he take it at 38?

Q: Many people still believe that Tate is a better fighter than Weaver. How would you have fought Tate had that fight come off? Would you have rope-a-doped?

A: No. Not rope-a-dope. I'd stay off the ropes. I'd move in and out. Speed. Hit him with a hard right. He gets knocked out. Stevenson knocked him out in the Olympics. He's got a record of being knocked out. When you get knocked out, that's a sign you can be knocked out again.

Q: What weight do you want to be when you make your comeback?

A: About 225.

Q: What was the highest you weighed since the layoff?

A: 251.

Q: You haven't fought since the Spinks fight in September 1978. A lot of people say you have not had a real good fight, you have not looked good since the third Frazier fight in 1975.

A: This just makes it more interesting, makes it more controversial, makes the fight bigger. Good.

Q: Do you think you'll look better for Weaver than you did in the first Spinks fight? Will you be in good shape?

A: Still better. I've had a year-and-a-half rest. You see me in the gym now, you see how good I look. People got to realize the extent of my greatness. When I retired, they thought they saw the best that I could do. I could do better yet. I didn't really let it all out. I've never really trained hard for a fight.

Q: How do your legs feel?

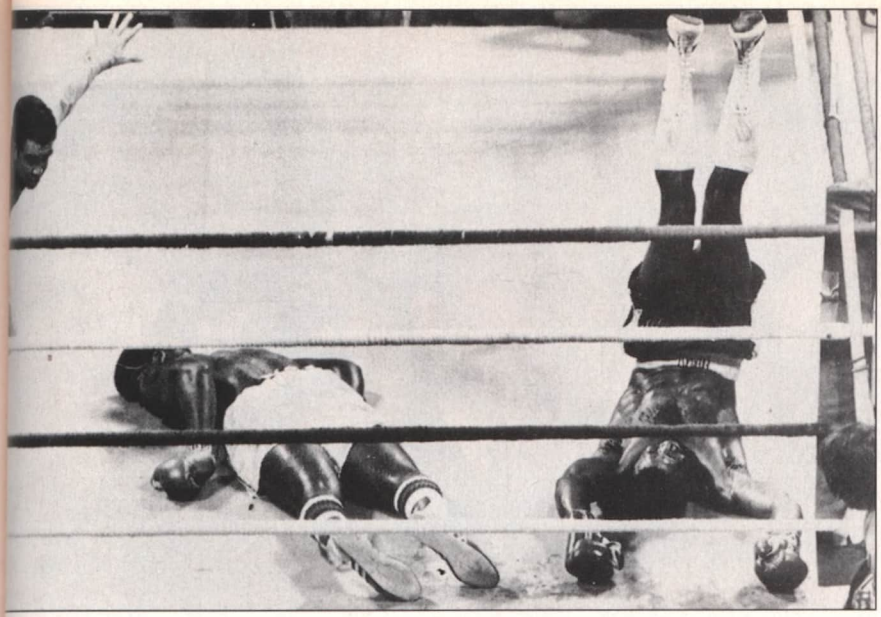
A: Man, I am tellin' you I'm ready. I walked 11 miles on my legs. I still dance like I did 10 years ago, movin' and stickin', lefts and rights, stopping on a dime, turnin' and pivotin'.

Q: How is your hand speed? Is it as fast as it was?

A: No different than it was when I fought Spinks. Maybe a little faster. I'm tellin' you I ain't no different.

Q: Muhammad, why are so many people against you on this?

A: Because their logic and their reasonin' which they have made for themselves clashes with my ambition, since they can't see



Ali was to have made his comeback against John Tate, but that fell apart when Tate was starched by Mike Weaver in the 15th round of their March 31, 1980, title fight.

what I'm doin' through their way of lookin' t things. I had a friend, he said, "Billy, why re you so devoted to Mary? She's not attrac-ive, she's not beautiful, what do you see in er?" Billy said, "To see Mary, you must orrow my eyes." People look at me through heir eyes and they can't judge me through heir eyes.

Q: What does Angelo Dundee think of this comeback? Have you talked it over with him?

A: He thinks, he *knows*, I can do it if I get nto shape and my weight is right. He knows won't have no trouble, really, gettin' down he weight.

Q: So that's the important thing, being well-trained for the fight, being in shape, as far as Angelo is concerned.

A: Naturally, I don't want to go into a fight ut of shape.

Q: Well, you have sometimes not been in the best of shape for some of your fights. You have to admit that.

A: Yeah, well, you can't be in shape for very fight. I'd get in better shape for Frazier han I would for Scott LeDoux. I'd get in better shape for Norton than I would for Jurgen Blin of Germany.

Q: Larry Holmes said that he considers your comeback an embarrassment to box-ing. What do you have to say to Larry Holmes?

A: It's an embarrassment to him because his stock has failed greatly. Nobody talks to Holmes now. Holmes ain't gettin' in the newspapers now. Sugar Ray Leonard and John Tate, their stock has failed. Everybody's talkin' about Muhammad Ali. Nobody's thinkin' about Holmes. That makes Holmes embarrassed. Who's Larry Holmes now? They're not talking about no $16-million for one of his fights.

Q: If you beat Mike Weaver, will you go after Holmes next?

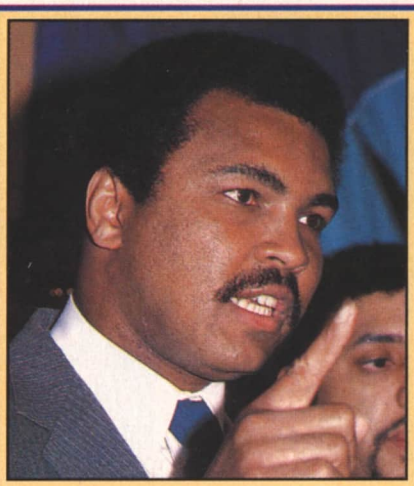
A: Holmes! I want Holmes! I want Holmes three months after, no, two months after. While I'm still in shape. I'm too old to get outta shape and then get back again.

Q: So then you'd be heavyweight champion five times ...

A: Now you're talkin'! Five times heavyweight champion of the world! I'm tellin' you now, that's why I'm comin' back, because it's just, just the impossible! What I've done is rough. But to be five times world heavyweight champion. Man, can you imagine that? I'd take a walk down the boulevard the next day and people would say, "There goes the five time champion." Man!

Q: In all your fights, you've only been cut once, by Bob Foster. Yet in training, a kid named Jeff Sims cuts you so that you needed stitches. Does this indicate anything to you?

A: It indicated that I should wear a mouthpiece at all times. I didn't have a mouthpiece, I didn't come down there to train; I was there for President Carter's campaign. I just jumped into the ring without a mouthpiece, my lip hit my teeth and I got cut. It don't mean nothing. If I had a rubber mouthpiece, I wouldn't have got cut. It's the same punch I get hit with all the time and I never get cut.



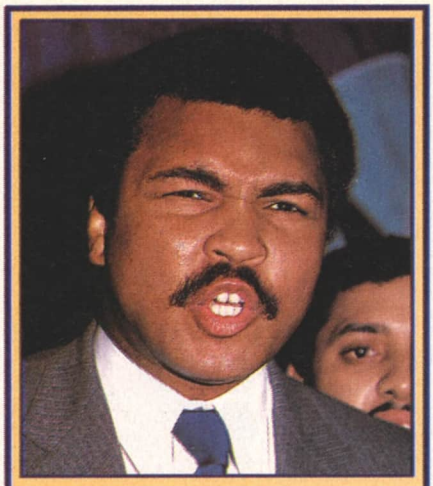
"Don't you even suggest failure! Why would I go out a loser at this late date? Three times world heavyweight champion. First black man to go out and come back and be a loser ... Wouldn't it be terrible? But I cannot lose!"

Q: No man has ever held the heavyweight title through three decades. In fact, you've gone through two generations of heavyweights. First, the Liston and Pattersons. Then the Fraziers, Nortons, and Shavers. They're all gone yet you're still here.

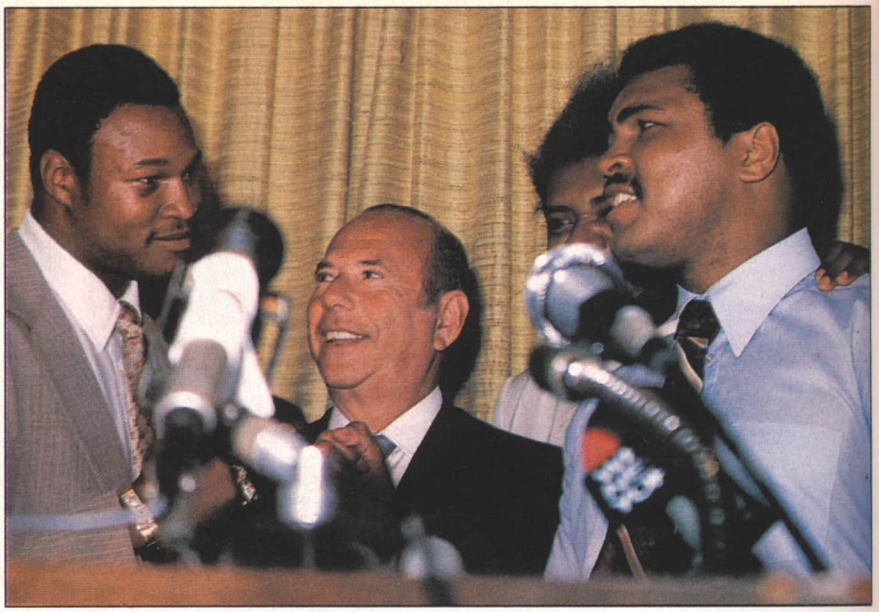
A: You just told me something. You're right. Sonny Liston, Ingemar Johansson, Floyd Patterson, they're all gone. Then the Joe Fraziers came, the Ken Nortons, the Leon Spinks and George Foremans, now they're gone. Hey, man, you're talkin' now. That's another reason I'm comin' back. What I'm doin' is superhuman.

Q: But does it make you feel old that you're still fighting and they've all retired?

A: No, see, wisdom comes with age. I got gray hairs, I know I'm older. But just the idea of still being here. When I do something now, it's an old man doing it their way. If I shuffle and dance, they say look at



"I bet you my life that I'll be the big favorite before fight night, after they see me in trainin'. They'll see me dancin', and they know no man can hit me when I'm dancin'."



Former sparmates Ali and Larry Holmes square off at a press conference announcing their October 1980 fight. The mustachioed Ali was referring to himself as "Dark Gable."

the old man dancin'. I get extra credit for it! When I danced years ago, it was just natural. Now, just to come into this fight at 225, it will shock 'em. I was 250, they showed my big fat belly in all the newspapers. To come in lean and trim it will be a shock. So many things will shock 'em. Dancin', good timin', reflexes, to win the fight will be a shock. When I fought Sonny Liston, people who were six years old are now 21 years old.

Q: It's been said that a very important factor in this comeback decision was that you needed money. Is this true? Is this the most important reason for your comeback?

A: No, no. It's always good to have money. Rolls-Royce, they want money. Ford still wants money. Ain't nothin' wrong with wantin' to get money. But the main thing is the historical, it's for the record. And you tell 'em if I am broke, I won't be broke after this $16-million!

Q: You really have no doubts you will be successful, do you?

A: Oh man, I don't have to think about this. Don't you even suggest failure. Why would I go out a loser at this late date? Three times world heavyweight champion. First black man to go out and come back, and be a loser to him? Wouldn't it be terrible? But I cannot lose!

Q: Do you ever think that if this comeback fails, if you do lose, you may destroy a legend it took 15 years to build?

A: The legend *would* be destroyed. People will say, "He's so dumb, he made a dumb decision. He had it made, he had money, commercials, movies, good-lookin' three times champ, came back and lost, wasn't this terrible? I feel so terrible?"

Q: So you are aware of what people would say if you lose.

A: I'm not crazy. But I'm gonna win! He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life. I'm like an explorer. The white man understands me. White people are explorers. Some white men may say I'm crazy, but the white man who's wise will say, "Muhammad Ali has picked a great time to do this. Ali can muster up enough vigor and ambition to win this title and will go out as the greatest athlete in the world." Not fighter, greatest athlete! See, heavyweight champion is the biggest title in sports. But four times champion. I'll be greater than all football players, all basketball players, all baseball players, all hockey players, all the winter gold medal winners, all the summer gold medal winners. I'll be greater than all athletes in the world! I'll have a record that they know can't be broken.

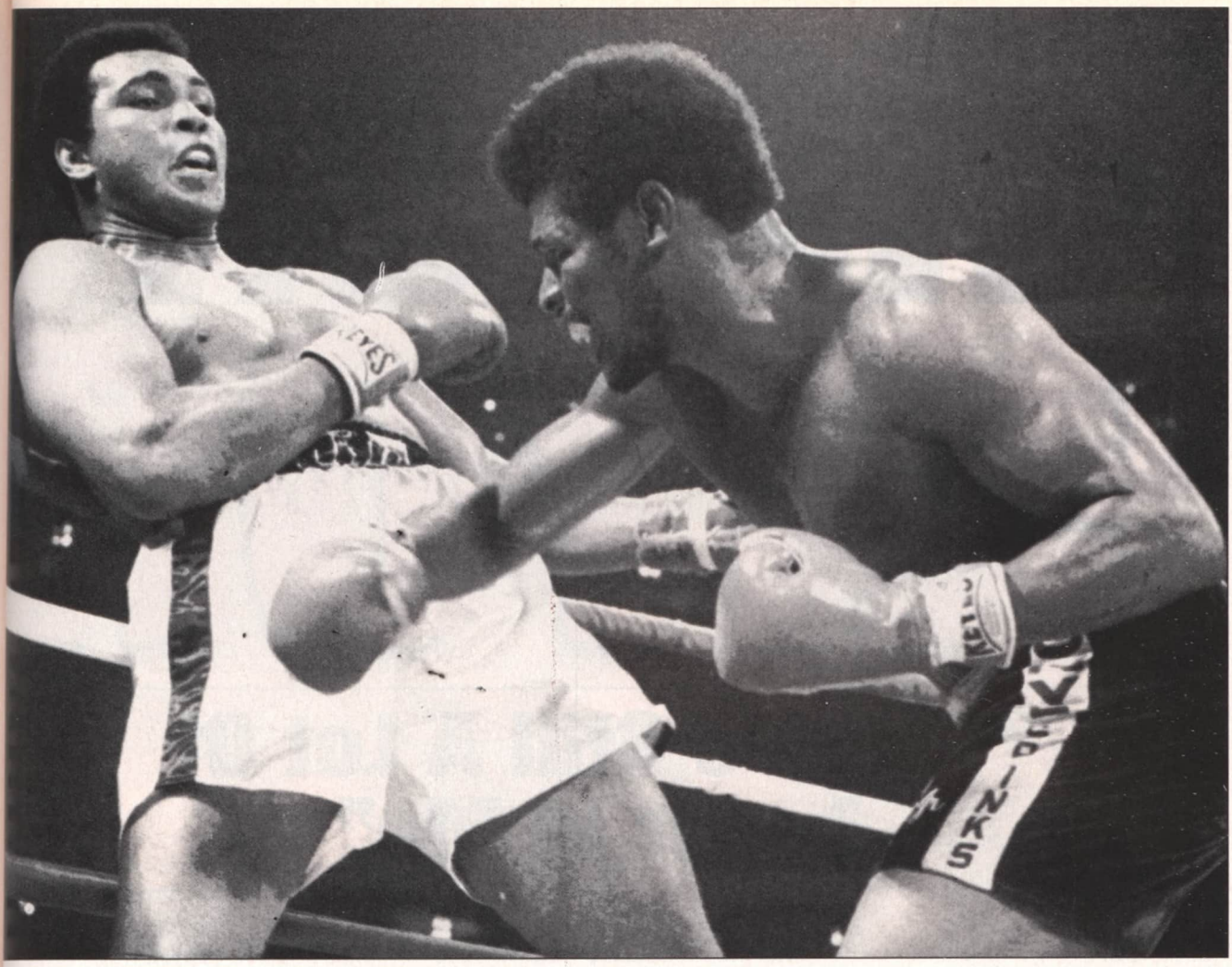
This is a spiritual revival that the world can listen and watch. Many people need confidence. Many people need hope. Many people give up too easily. I dedicate this fight to all people who feel like givin' up—don't give up. Many white people and black people have come to me and said, "It's your life, your positive thinking, the way you fought the draft, the way you overcame Frazier, the way you overcame Norton, the way you beat Foreman, the way you beat Spinks, that has helped me in my life. Thank you, Mr. Ali!"

Q: So once again, it will be Muhammad Ali as the number-one attraction in sports.

A: Four-time world heavyweight champion. Everybody said it can't be done. You're too old. And I'm gonna make the experts look crazy. I'm gonna make the boxing writers look like fools. I'm gonna shock my wife, my mother, even they don't have faith, they think it might not happen, all those who have doubts. I want this to be a lesson for all people, don't, don't, when odds are against you, believe in God, have faith in yourself, be positive, and go ahead, and knock 'em out! You have your Larry Holmes in your life, you have your John Tates in your life, and you fight yours, I gotta fight mine. Let's do the impossible together!

Q: Do you think you'll be the underdog for your comeback fight?

A: I bet you, I bet you my life, that I'll be the big favorite before fight night, after they see me in trainin'. They'll see me dancin', and they know no man can hit me when I'm dancin'. The whole thing is, at 33, they said, "His legs are gone." Remember the last Spinks fight? I danced 15 rounds. Now, have I got that old in the year-and-a-half where I can't dance no more? I don't drink, don't



ess than two years after dancing to a 15-round decision over Leon Spinks and regaining the title, Ali saw no reason why he couldn't do it again. The reatest relished the thought of becoming a four-time champion and proving his detractors wrong.

moke, don't eat pork, I'm a Muslim. If I put y mind to it, I'll dance another 15 rounds! Dance 15 rounds! Can't you hear my confi-ence? Can't you hear my positive thinking? will be no problem. *Nooo* problem! I know 'm gonna do it. Why would I fight and get mbarrassed in front of the world and go out loser. All my life it would bother me.

Q: Are you surprised by the reactions of me of those around you when you decid-d to make a comeback? For instance, hat did your wife think?

A: She just hopes I don't get hurt.

Q: I'm sure everybody hopes that.

A: Get hurt? For who? What's wrong with eople? What did I do to make them think I ould be hurt? Because of age? See, they are mpressed by limitations. Limitations cause d age. Limitations cause inactivity. That n't bother me. I'm tryin' to tell you, they n't judge my logic with their logic. I can e farther than they do. That's why I'm the orld's most famous man. They cannot do what I do. They should not believe like I believe because they're not as great as me.

Q: So no one can judge Ali but Ali himself.

A: That's right. They can't judge me with their limited thinking. They can't judge me with their limited vision, their limited knowledge. They're just working people. They work for a salary. They will never see a million dollars. They will never see $120,000 cash. They never met [Premier] Brezhnev of Russia, they never met [Vice Chairman] Deng Xiaoping of China, they'll never be called by the President to work for America in African countries. They are not me. They can't judge me with their limited knowledge. I'm too high!

Q: Well, you know we all wish you luck, because ...

A: No! Don't wish me luck! I don't want no luck. I want skill. I want Allah, God. I don't want no luck.

Q: All right, Muhammad, we wish you skill, and we wish you to be in shape.

ALI UPDATE

Ali never did fight Weaver, but in October 1980 he fought Holmes, and was stopped for the only time in his legendary 56-5 (37) career. Ali fought once more, losing a 10-round decision to Trevor Berbick in December '81. By then even Ali realized the truth: He was totally washed-up, more a danger to himself than to his opponents. Today, Ali remains an icon throughout the world, but suffers from Parkinson's disease. Many believe that it was the blows to the head he absorbed in the latter part of his career that led to his present condition. Although Ali never strayed far from the public eye during retirement, his lighting of the torch at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta brought about an Ali revival that culminated with the release of a new movie about his life starring Will Smith in 2001.

AARON PRYOR

"There's Still A Lot Of Anger In Me"

UNDEFEATED AND underpublicized, WBA junior welterweight champion Aaron "The Hawk" Pryor of Cincinnati is the modern-day Henry Armstrong, a short, compact puncher with a tireless, whirlwind attack. It is doubtful that Pryor will go unappreciated for much longer. His style and his ability to make the weight limit at lightweight, junior welterweight, or welterweight ensure him a place in his share of nationally televised title fights.

The morning of the Larry Holmes-Muhammad Ali fight, Steven Farhood interviewed Pryor at his hotel suite in Las Vegas. Pryor had just received the news that he would be making his first title defense, against Gaeton Hart in Montreal. "The Hawk" spoke candidly of Muhammad Ali, Howard Davis Jr., Sugar Ray Leonard, and Howard Cosell, his title-winning effort against the legendary Antonio "Kid Pambele" Cervantes, and the loss no one will let him forget. There was no Pryor restraint.

Interview conducted October 1980

Q: By the time this interview is in print, you will have defended your title for the first time, against Gaeton Hart on CBS.

A: If I let him beat me, I'm quitting. I've seen him fight. He's not a championship fighter.

Q: You fought for the junior welterweight title because you couldn't get a shot at the lightweights. Is the junior welter title what you really want?

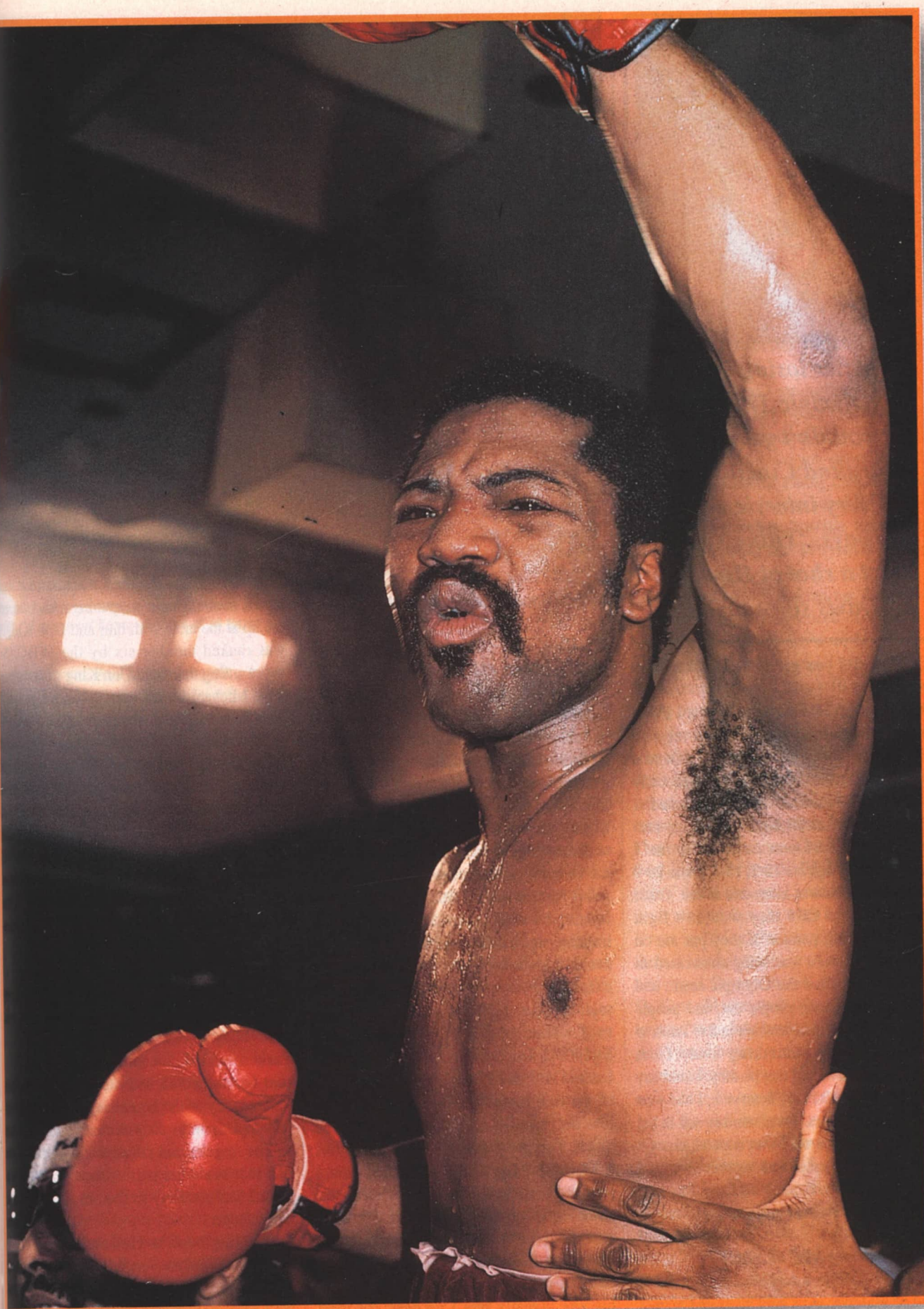
A: Any title is important to have. The junior welterweight title I was forced into because none of the lightweights would fight me. I moved up to number three ranking by the WBC. [Jim] Watt wouldn't fight me, [Hilmer] Kenty wouldn't fight me. I was told I could wait a year and maybe move up to the number-one contender. I went for the shot when it was offered to me. But it wasn't what I really wanted. Someday I would still like to come back down and fight lightweight. And my manager [Buddy LaRosa] has also come to me and asked me if I'd fight welterweight. Already I've been offered a million dollars to fight Tommy Hearns. And I have to see what's gonna happen with the fight between Roberto Duran and Ray Leonard. If it doesn't come off, I've also been offered $500,000 to fight Ray Leonard. Ray Leonard was teasing me last night. He said he weighed 141. I said, "Good." If I went down to lightweight, Hilmer Kenty would fight me. His pride would make him fight me. We fought 14 times in the amateurs, I won nine.

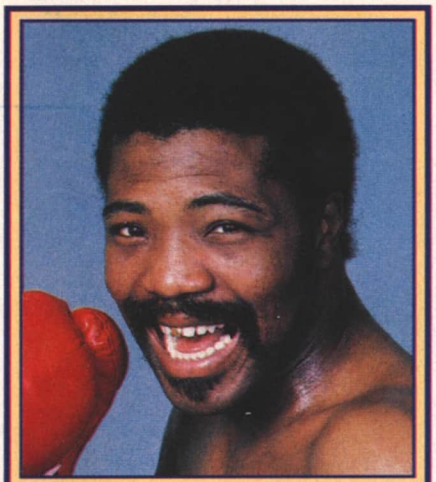
Q: Did you ever stop Kenty?

A: No. He's got tremendous heart. Every time he's been down in the pros, I've said, "Watch. He'll get up."

Q: Did he ever stop you?

A: No. I've only been stopped once in my life, when I was 16 years old, I fought Norman Goins, who was 23. He hit me in the stomach in Minnesota. The referee stopped the fight. I didn't go down. So when I became 23 and Goins became 30, they asked me if I would like to fight him again. He floored Howard [Davis] and he had just fought to a split decision with [Saoul] Mamby in the Garden. I knocked him out in the ninth round.





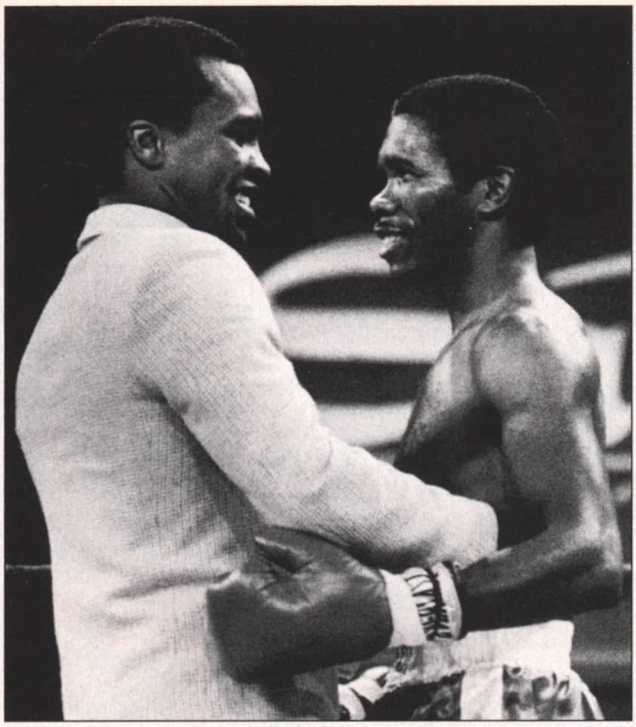
"After losing in the Olympic Trials, I couldn't get a job around Cincinnati. Every interview was always, 'Think you'll get a shot at Howard Davis someday?'"

Q: How did you get stiffed in the lightweights?

A: I got freezed out by the Howard Davis people. I heard it was because me and Howard fought in the Olympic Trials to a split decision (Davis won and subsequently captured a gold medal). So after I worked as a sparring partner for eight months, no promoters or fighters were interested in me. I was watching fighters 12-2, 13-3. I was 20-0 and still no one was interested in me. Other managers told CBS they wouldn't fight Davis' sparring partner. If they put me on TV while Howard was being showcased as the darling star of the Olympic team, and then I go knocking people out, and people find out I lost a split decision in the Trials to Davis, it takes something away from Howard Davis. Then maybe they would say he [Davis] didn't really deserve it. I had won the Pan Am games. I was number one in the world. I had been on TV at least 12 times. I had the best international record. Even if I had gotten a break on an undercard at 12-0 or something, I would've gotten more recognition.

Q: What about ABC or NBC?

A: I had gone to a representative of ABC and he said they were only interested in gold medal winners. That kind of disappointed me.



Former Olympic teammates Sugar Ray Leonard and Howard Davis Jr. share a moment in the ring. At one time friends of both, Pryor felt he was shunned by Leonard and frozen out by Davis.

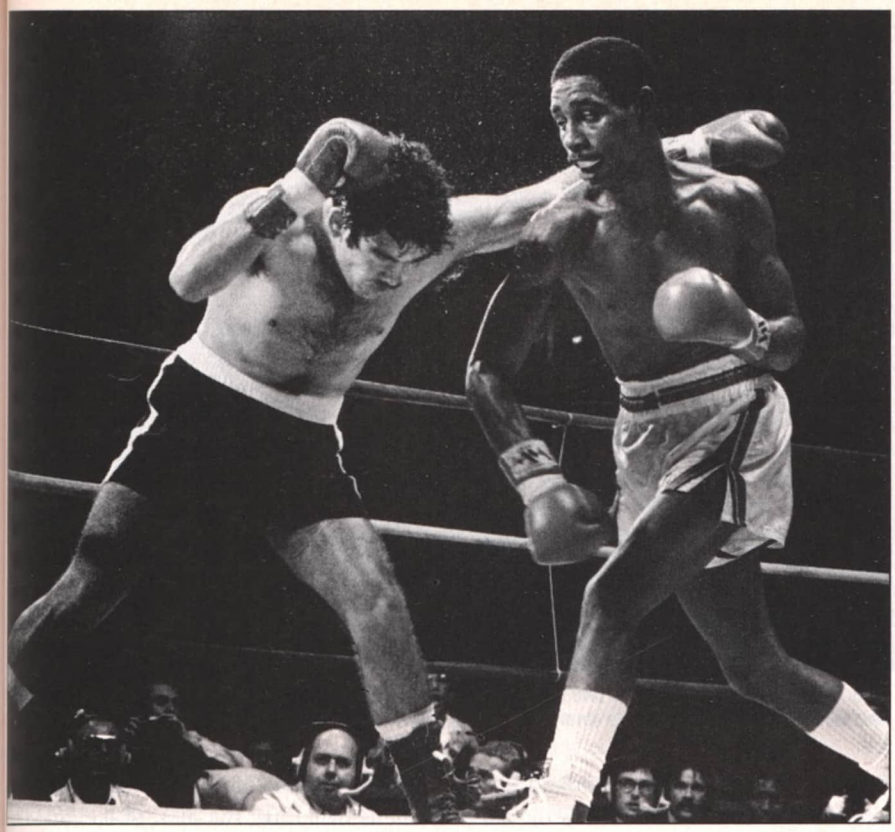
Q: How did you get involved with Madison Square Garden?

A: I signed a contract for a year with Gil Clancy (the Garden boxing matchmaker) and they got me the toughest guys to fight. I fought Diablito Valdes, another fighter nobody wanted to fight. They showed the knockout round on TV on the Benitez-Turner undercard. I fought on a Duran undercard in February on NBC. They told me they might show my fight. I fought a good fighter named Juan Garcia. I was fighting for nothing. For $1,500. I was getting five and six thousand dollars at home. I couldn't understand why I couldn't get the chance to make some money. My manager said, "Aaron, this is your first opportunity to get seen by the network. Take the $1,500." I was so mad, you know, I went out and knocked the dude out at 28 seconds of the first round. I was happy I knocked him out, happy I won. TV said it was too quick. They were scared it would look like a setup. But I knock all my opponents out. I knocked Jose Fernandez out in 55 seconds. I was really hurt. I had told my parents and everybody to watch. I even told Duran to knock out his guy [Wellington Wheatley] so I could get on TV. That brought tears to my eye. I really feel I've been the most cheated fighter. That's why I fight the way I do. There's still a lot of anger in me.

I was getting sick watching nobodies fight on TV. I was in Gil Clancy's office and he said we were gonna have a press conference tomorrow to announce that I'd fight any fighter in his hometown. And he said Mike Dokes was having a press conference down the street with NBC. And I know Michael Dokes from the amateurs. We roomed together in Mexico. You know a lot of fighters are not like Sugar Ray Leonard; they remember me. So I went down there and we hugged each other and talked about what's happening. And he set me up at the table with him and Don King. I was ranked number six by the WBC. So we're sitting there and Don King gets up and raps, Michael Dokes gets up and raps, and they introduce just about everybody there except me. I said, "Oh, wow. Am I anybody being number six or what?" I even asked Don King to introduce me, and he didn't do it. Afterwards, I went up to Dr. Pacheco (NBC's boxing analyst). I wanted to let them know I was there and I was pissed off they didn't introduce me. I said, "You don't know me, but you were introducing everybody up there." I said, "my name is Aaron Pryor." He said, "I know you, I know you. I didn't know you were in the house." And I was sitting 10 feet away from him. The next day I had my press conference and I told everybody about the day before. Ferdie Pacheco called and said he was sorry and that he wanted to use me in the fight in Kansas City with [Leonidas] Asprilla. So I had something to do with that. Then I went to Los Angeles and talked to the Ali people and that made me part of that. In the title fight I had more say so than my attorney or my manager.

Q: Getting back to Howard Davis for a moment. What do you think his problems are, and what do you see in his future?

A: I love Howard Davis. He's a real good



Pryor considered WBA lightweight titlist Hilmer Kenty "the best boxer I have ever been in the ring with." Pryor beat Kenty nine out of 14 times as an amateur.

personal friend. And I wish I wasn't competition to him, but I am. Howard wanted to be champion. I don't know if he wants to now. Against Watt, for some reason, he didn't have the confidence. He wanted to box. He fought like it was a regular fight, like he was fighting Vilomar [Fernandez] or somebody. He didn't go out and go for broke. Maybe because he had money. Like Leonard, when he fought Duran, he didn't go for broke. When I fought [for the title], I went for broke. I was the challenger. I think Howard could fight and possibly get himself together to beat Jim Watt. I don't think he should fight Kenty. I think he still wants to fight. After his loss, this was before I was champ, we talked and I gave him some positive words. I told him he still had two more fights with CBS and he didn't want to take them because he was pretty hurt. I told him look what you have today and look what I have, just a big record.

After I won my title, his dad asked me if I would work out with him again. I said yeah, but this time he'll be *my* sparring partner.

Q: What about Howard's father-trainer? Is that a problem for Howard?

A: I think he should've had somebody else. If nothing else, somebody else to argue with him about things. He had a lot of problems with sparring partners. They didn't ask me for the Watt fight, but I wanted to work out with him, not for the money, but as a favor. When nobody would fight me, and I had no income, he gave me $300 a week for training and that was a blessing, even though I'm under contract with my manager and he gave me $125 a week also. But when you're married (Pryor is since divorced) and have a kid, $125 a week ain't a lot of money. Me and Howard ain't as good friends as me and Ray Leonard were, and Ray Leonard wouldn't do that for me. Ray and me roomed together everywhere we went. We roomed together in Russia, and I came to Baltimore and stayed with his trainer. Now it's like, "When I get time, I'll call you." He's too big now. I told him last night, I said, "God can take everything he gave you. Everything. And God will do it if you don't handle yourself right." I wanted to show him you don't have to change because you win a championship. He had changed on me so much. We talked till four in the morning. He was saying, "Aaron, can't nobody do nothing for you. You got to do it for yourself." He said, "I got a big family, I have to support my family." I said, "Listen, Ray, I wasn't asking you for no money. I'm a fighter, I got two arms and legs like you. All I wanted was your spiritual help and concern. He said, "Well, if I went to Muhammad Ali, do you think he'd do that for me?" I said, "But you and Muhammad Ali weren't friends like we were." We went back and forth. I said if you're making people millionaires, how about you and me make a fight? He said it was a possibility. If that's the way he wants to be—all business, we can be all business.

Q: Back to Aaron Pryor. Have you always had that unique ability to throw hundreds of punches without getting tired?

A: Always. It's just a natural thing. The first time I heard Gil Clancy on a videotape say, "He thinks he's supposed to go 15 rounds like that." I said ain't you supposed to? Maybe when I started getting tired, I'll pace myself. But I haven't gotten tired yet.

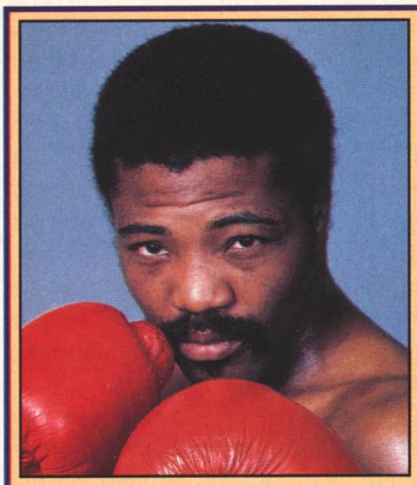
Q: In the Leonidas Asprilla fight, you punched nonstop for 10 rounds. Were you tired at all?

A: No. And he was making me do all the work. Only thing I was tired of were the people in my corner who were new to me were yelling at me to slow down. I like to think on my own. I don't like anybody telling me what to do. When I fought for the title, Freddie Brown, who was new in my corner, told me to slow down and relax. I don't like to slow down in the early rounds because then I start to think. In the early rounds I don't have to think, I can just fight. That's what endurance is for. Fight early and think in the later rounds. Freddie was saying, "Slow down, you got 15 rounds." I just shut them out and thought what I was gonna do. It was my title fight. I would've listened to them if I had gotten in trouble. After the second round, Freddie Brown accepted it.

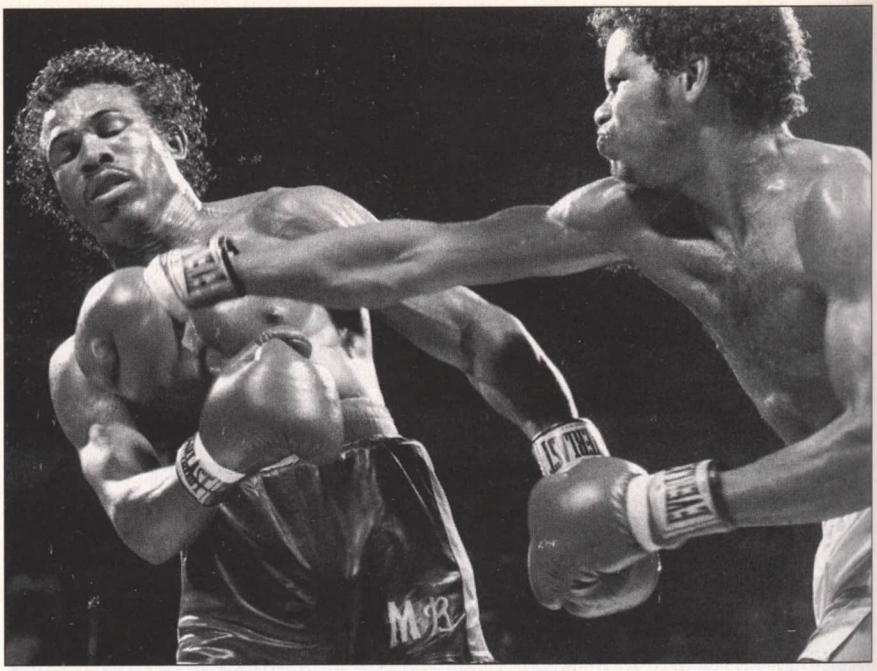
Q: How old were you when you knew you wanted to go into boxing?

A: I started boxing when I was 13. I had 220 amateur fights. I lost 16. I ran track and I was a little bit too slow. I played basketball, but at the time in the early-'70s, the coaches were only interested in the tall guys. I played football and was too small, got my legs broken. I couldn't reach a goal in none of those. So I started boxing. A guy hit me and I hit him back two times. He started crying because his nose was bleeding. So I became good.

Q: Was there pressure at home?



"I thought Gil [Clancy] was lying because he told me everybody won't fight me. So he got on the phone and called Mamby's house and he said, 'Gil, anybody you bring me I'll fight but Pryor.'"



Pryor had little hope of getting a unification bout with his WBC counterpart, Saoul Mamby. Before both held titles, Mamby made it quite clear than he had no desire to get into the ring with "The Hawk."

A: Yes, definitely. My mother didn't always sign for me to fight. In every fight they give you a certificate to have your mother sign before you were able to fight. I think I signed about 300 of them. I forged them myself. My mother would say, "You gonna get hurt. You leave boxing alone." She came to see me for the big ones. She came when I lost to Howard and she came to see me when I fought for the title.

Q: Was your father around?

A: No, I didn't see my dad until I was 18. He and my mother were divorced. I was staying in my own apartment and he came to see me. It was the first time we had seen each other in a long time. He still don't mean nothing to me. Since it happened, I don't take it and forget about it. I take it as a lesson. I have a son and I know how he's gonna feel if I'm never around. I try to keep a relationship with his mother so I can still see him. For 20 fights I've been carrying my son into the ring as my good luck charm because I was barely able to take care of him.

Q: When you were young, who did you look up to in boxing?

A: Of course, everybody looked up to Muhammad Ali because he was the *main* fighter. I met Ali just before the Diablito [Valdes] fight in Florida. Ali had come to Cincinnati because his brother lived in Cincinnati, and his brother told him how great I was. And he came to see me fight Norman Goins. It was a real, real scientific fight. Afterwards, we sat down and talked. He said he would do something for me. He gave me a couple of people to call. I couldn't get in touch with them. I couldn't do nothing. Then we saw each other in Florida. I said, "Do you remember me?" This was in front of everybody in the dressing room. I said, "I'm the fighter from Cincinnati you lied to. You said you would get me some fights. I've been an idol of yours all your life. You didn't have to do that. If you weren't gonna do nothing, you shouldn't've told me. You didn't have to." He was shocked that I had the care to tell him. He said, "You crazy. But you a good fighter." And not too long after that he told his people to get in touch with Pryor. And I got the title fight.

Q: Now that you are a world champion, do you look at yourself differently? And do the people who know you act differently toward you? Do you have a lot of sudden "friends"?

A: People will say, "He should have been champion a long time ago." I'm a loner. I didn't have none [friends] then and I'm not looking for none now. Associates, when the time is right, fine. But most of the time I'm sitting here by myself. I haven't made no money. I'm the first champion to win a title broke. Now that I'm champion, I don't get psyched up about being champion until I defend it two, three times, make some money. Then I'll sit down. I made my goal of winning the title, now my goal is to make four to five hundred thousand dollars, put it in the bank in my name. In my whole career, I've never bought anything. I've saved all of it.

Q: How much did you make for the Cervantes fight?

A: Fifty thousand.

Q: How much did Cervantes get?

A: Two-hundred and fifty thousand.

Q: Was that your biggest payday by far?

A: Definitely. It would've been nice if it went all to me. I got half of it.

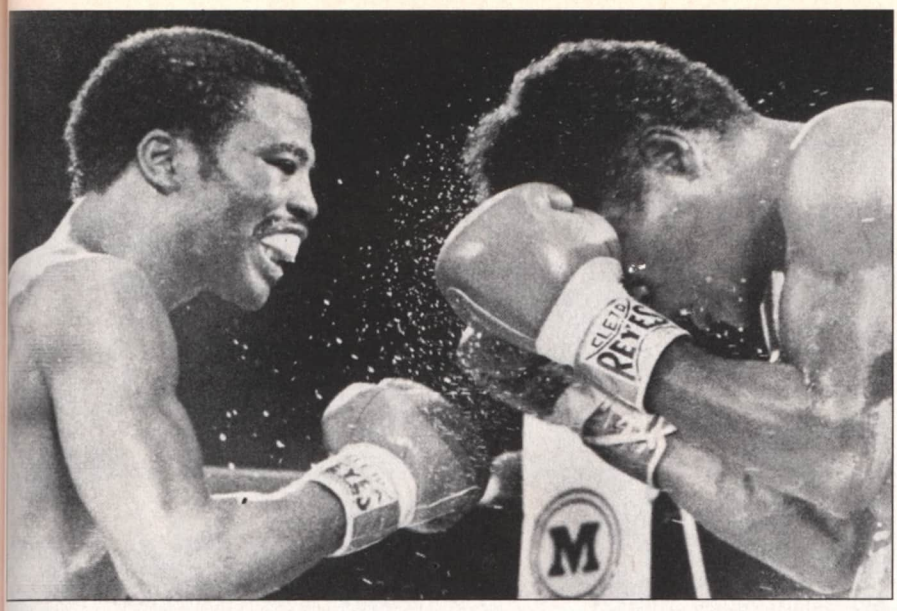
Q: Where'd the other half go?

A: My manager.

Q: Isn't the relationship usually 70-30?

A: I think it is. But for years he's been giving me a weekly salary. I think it's all right because if he didn't give me the $125 a week and I had to work eight hours and then go to the gym, it might be kind of hard. Now hopefully, after I've had a couple of title defenses and he makes a couple of hundred thousand dollars, I'm sure he'd agree with me to make it 70-30.

Q: Were you surprised Cervantes was willing to come to Cincinnati?



Leonidas Asprilla sustained a non-stop assault for 10 rounds before the referee stopped the fight. Pryor's corner wanted the fighter to pace himself, but that just wasn't The Hawk's style.

A: I was surprised. When he came to Cincinnati I told myself either I'm gonna get knocked out or I'm gonna get the title. I wasn't about to come out of my hometown with him walking out with the title with me on my feet. I was going out all the way, starting with round one. I was thinking about banging till round 15. In my hometown, that clicked me on. I had never been that high before for a fight. It was beautiful to fight in my hometown because I've been the underdog so much. It was a changeover. I mean after me losing in the Olympic Trials, I couldn't get a job around Cincinnati. Every interview was always, "Think you'll get a shot at Howard Davis someday?" Howard Davis has been in my career since I lost till now. Every conversation was about Howard Davis.

Q: You obviously knew that Cervantes was going to be tough after he put you down in the first round. How much did you respect him as a fighter?

A: I wasn't up on Cervantes. I didn't want to know too much about him. I didn't know him. I didn't have any respect for him as a fighter. I just knew what my abilities were. I asked all the important things: what kind of knockout record he had, if he was tall or short, what kind of fighter he was. I'm a very scared fighter. But that's only before a fight. I was afraid of him until the bell rang. I guess a big part of it was I didn't want to lose before I became champ. It's like going back to the Olympics [Trials]. It's all downhill.

Q: What do you work on in the gym?

A: My handlers feel I'm pretty stable. Just working on my body. We work with numbers. I train different from most fighters. I train with codes like 10-4. When I can remember those codes ... Seven is catching the guy's jab and punching off the jab. Two is my upper body movement and bobbing and weaving. Ten-four is work the body and the head. Work the 10 is work the body. These things come more effective to me because "work the body," [the opponent] can hear that, too. And we do a lot of rope work, stretched across the ring, bobbing and weaving under it. I'm a very good counterpuncher bobbing and weaving.

Q: When Cervantes put you down in the first round, were you hurt at all?

A: My leg went out on me. I knew from my experience that when I was knocked down that if I displayed some kind of movement to show that I'm all right, I would psych him and also psych the crowd. So I got up and showed movement like, "I'm not hurt. I'm ready to fight." It wasn't a hard shot, it was an off-balance shot. I was mad because the bell rung. I don't think Cervantes ever fought a guy like me, who didn't respect him, who came to him in that situation. They said he was an old fighter. I don't care what his age was, he has the ability of a champion. If I didn't come right after him, I know that he would've given me a much tougher fight.

Q: What kind of fighter is it going to take to defeat Aaron Pryor?

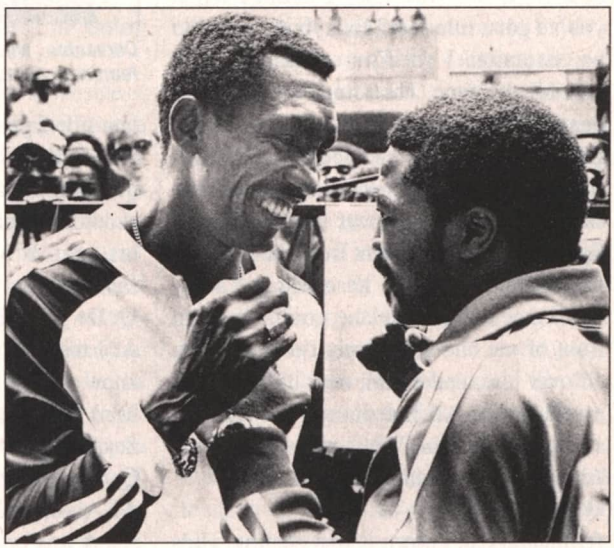
A: He's gonna have to outsmart me, because I'm very smart when I have to be. He's gonna have to outbully me, because I can push you around. Push you and tie you up and squeeze your muscles. And he's gonna have to outfight me. If he does all those things, he's the best. I'll let him know it and give it to him, because losing that fight [against Davis] has learned me to accept agony. I can accept it now.

Q: Tell us what you think of some of the top lightweights and junior welterweights in boxing today. Start with Hilmer Kenty.

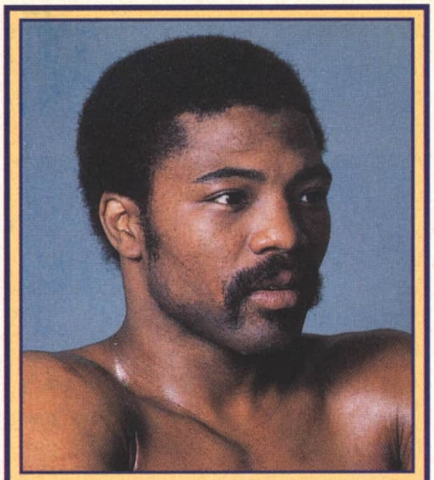
A: Hilmer Kenty is the best boxer I have ever been in the ring with. I think he has the best jab that's out in the business today. If we ever fought, it would be a good fight.

Q: Jim Watt.

A: Watt, he don't show me too much. He don't show me that he should be champion. He's a good, determined fighter. He's got a lot of heart. But he don't have the skills. I don't think he has the skills to hold on to the championship. I think Termite Watkins could beat him if they fought each other. I like his personality. It comes across strongly outside the ring, and I'm kind of glad he's got [the title] because he's been trying a long



Their was a great deal of mutual respect displayed between 24-year-old Pryor and 34-year-old WBA junior welterweight titlist Antonio Cervantes in the days leading up to their fight at Riverfront Coliseum in Cincinnati in August 1980.



"I really feel I've been the most cheated fighter. That's why I fight the way I do. I was getting sick watching nobodies on TV."

time. He's not a special southpaw. Some southpaws do special things. He's an ordinary southpaw.

Q: Alexis Arguello.

A: Alex, good fighter.

Q: Will he win the lightweight title?

A: Not Kenty's. Watt's, not Kenty's. Bob Arum offered me $100,000 to fight him two months before the title fight. I wanted that fight, but my manager talked me out of it. My manager said you probably could beat him, but why take a chance when you've got a title shot? Everybody wants to be champion. I got film on him, I watch him all the time. He actually almost got beat last time [against Cornelius Boza-Edwards]. He had some people there looking out for him. They shouldn't have stopped the fight. He was losing. I would fight him a little different from the ordinary fighter. I don't think he could get away from me. I don't feel he could stand in front of me and punch me. I'd be moving all over him, under him, over him, moving around him. All that lateral movement, side-to-side. That's what I would beat Alexis Arguello with.

Q: Sean O'Grady.

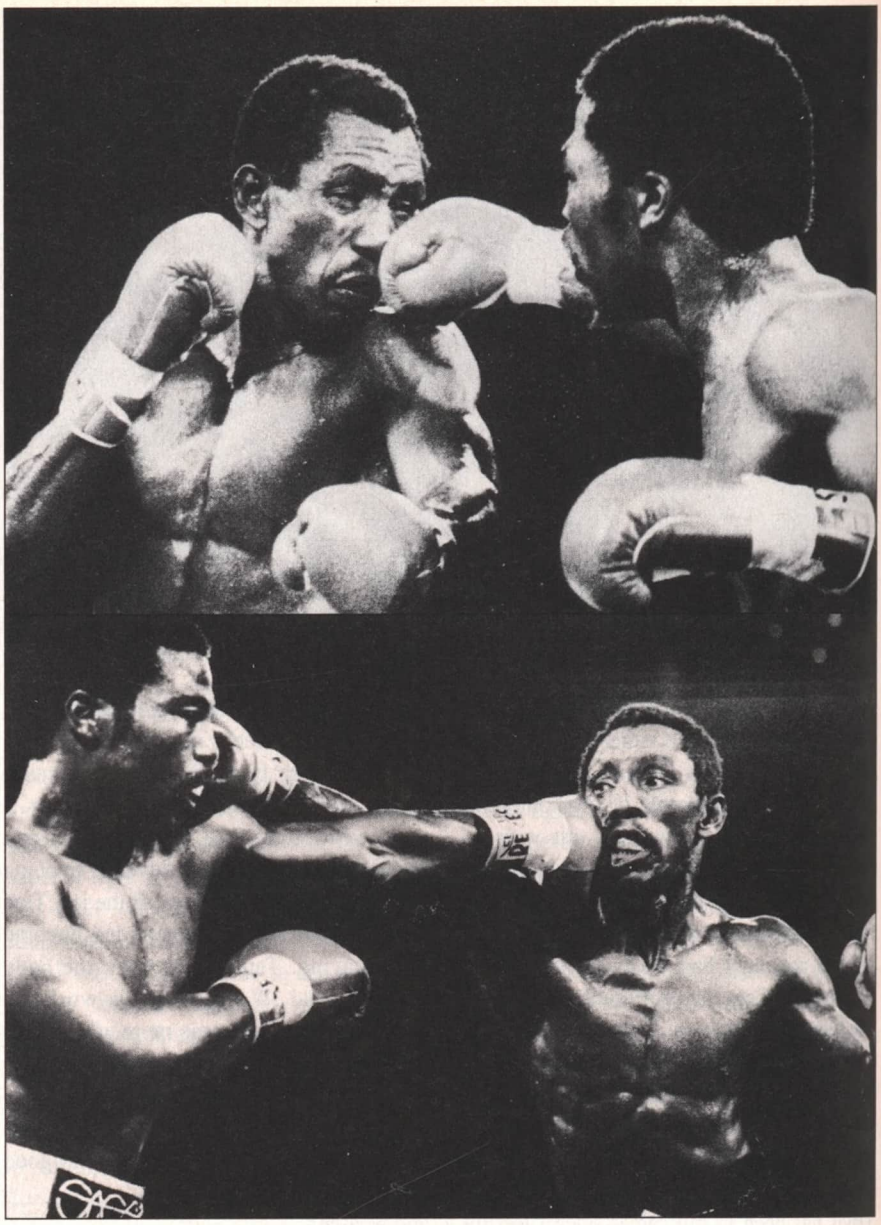
A: I should've known it was coming. He's a good fighter, but he's a baby. He's too protected. He turned down $200,000 to fight me last week, in a non-title fight. A non-title fight! He's already turned down a few fights with me and everybody else. I question his ability. I think that his father should stop babying him and let him go on his own. If he can't do it, get out of the fight game.

Q: Do you think he could beat Jim Watt?

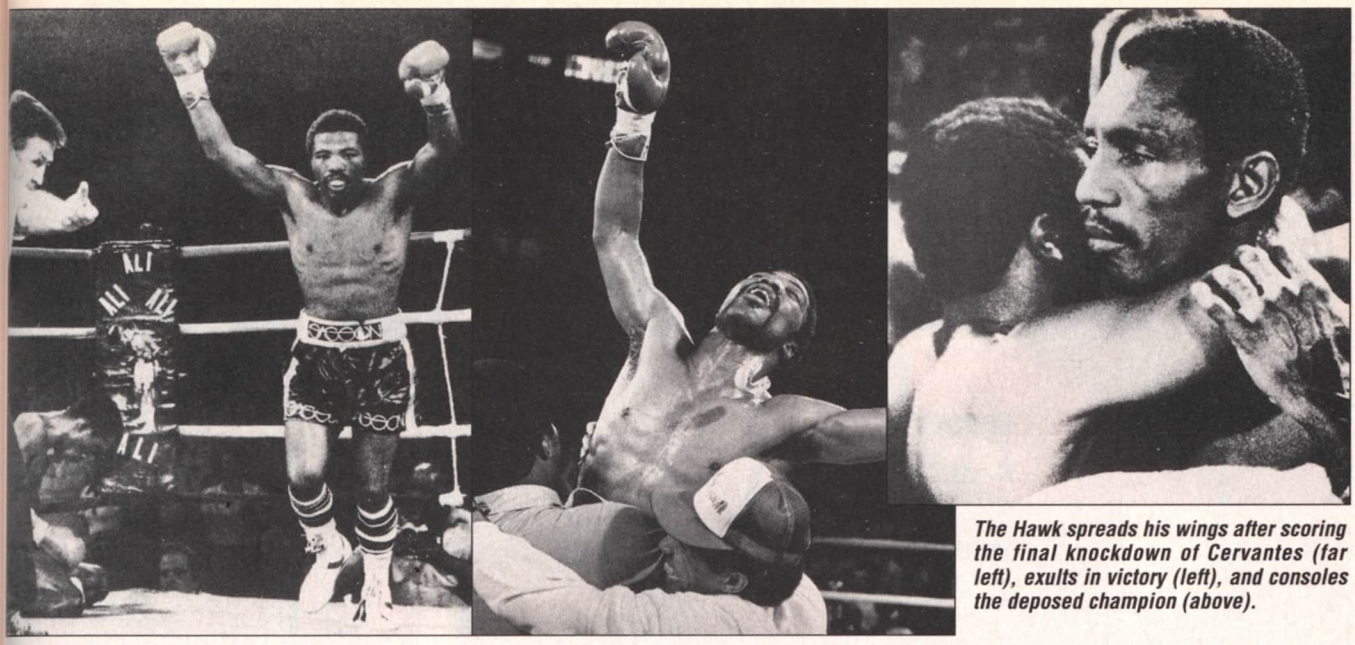
A: I think he's been too babied. He doesn't know what a real fight is. Jim Watt's got a heart bigger than his ability. That would beat Sean O'Grady.

Q: Saoul Mamby, your counterpart.

A: Another old-timer, but smart. Not as smart as Cervantes, but smart. In his own way, he's a smart fighter to protect himself. His technique is to protect himself. If I put the pressure on him, I don't think he can fight at all, but he can protect himself to where he won't get hurt. Before I won the title, Gil Clancy had offered him a shot with me. I thought Gil was lying because he told me everybody won't fight me; Marcos Barahona won't fight me, Pete Padilla won't fight me, nobody would fight me. I said, "Gil, I can't believe all these fighters fight at the Garden and none will give me a fight." So he got the phone and called Mamby's house and he said, "Gil, anybody you bring I'll fight but Pryor." I heard him say that, it shocked me. Then I knew Gil was kind of for real about people. I would like to fight Mamby. Mamby made a statement to one of the press people that he would like to fight me. But that's a while away. After a couple



Cervantes, who had 19 defenses since first winning the title in 1972, wilted under The Hawk's fearsome assault and was counted out at 1:47 of the fourth round.



The Hawk spreads his wings after scoring the final knockdown of Cervantes (far left), exults in victory (left), and consoles the deposed champion (above).

of defenses, I'll go for broke again like I did with Cervantes. That's where the money is, when you go for broke. You gotta go for broke.

Q: Anyone else in the junior welterweight division who is a possible challenger?

A: Monroe Brooks. He's been loudmouthing me since I got up here. He says, "You running from me, you won't give me a title shot." He's handled by MAPS. That's why I won't fight him. If I lose, I want to lose fair. I said, "What you ranked? You got to make the top 10. I made mine myself." He's not even in the top 10 yet. Also, Bruce Curry. There are some pretty good names in the division, but they've all been destroyed once. Brooks has been destroyed by Duran. Curry's been destroyed by Hearns.

Q: How much would you like to fight before you consider retirement?

A: Four years. I think the way I fight that I could fight for eight years, but another four giving it all I got. I'm giving it 120 percent, but after four, I'd be giving it 98. I want to enjoy what I have, like Leonard and everybody else that is, enjoying it while they're young. If for some reason I'm not successful for the next four years, then I'm thankful for the position I got. If it was up to a lot of the people in boxing, I wasn't supposed to get this position. Like Howard Cosell. I was working out with Leonard before his [Frank] Santore fight [in 1977]. So I was up in Baltimore and I was training, right? His people said, "Get yourself some publicity while you're here. Talk to Howard Cosell." I was ranked number six. So I went up to Howard Cosell. And I said Ray talked to me about getting a little publicity, doing a little interview, and I'm undefeated, 14-0, or 16-0. And Howard Cosell said, "Young man, no-name fighters seeking publicity from me," and he said it in a very eager way, "you have to prove yourself, young man. No." He just said point-blank, no. And that showed me. And to this day, no matter how great I do, that man will not interview me. When I went around I carried a brochure with my amateur accomplishments on it, my Pan American Games achievements, being number one [amateur] and he read it. And he said he wasn't interested. So I don't think he'd be interested now.

Q: What do you think you'll be doing after boxing's over?

A: I hope to go into some type of business. And keep my eye in the boxing game, with local fighters who are struggling like me. I would seek fighters who are good that nobody else would fight. I think I might look into that field a little more. I know the feeling to be neglected, to be held back and pushed down. My manager has 75 restaurants. I'm the first champion in Cincinnati in 25 years since Ezzard Charles. Maybe the city would recognize me enough to do something for me. Right now, when you speak of professional boxing [in Cincinnati], you speak of me. There isn't anybody else. It's a three-million-people city, and there's only one fighter, me. I've started a lot of boxing teams and I'm sponsoring the Golden Gloves this year. I'm putting something back into the program. Hopefully, I'll raise another crop of fighters and Cincinnati would be a big fight town like all the rest of them.

Q: When it's all over, what would you like your boxing epitaph to read?

A: Aaron Pryor was a fighter who wasn't supposed to be champ. Aaron Pryor wasn't supposed to get the chance.

PRYOR UPDATE

Pryor stopped Hart in six and went on to make a total of eight successful defenses of the WBA junior welterweight title. Two of those defenses were against Alexis Arguello (KO 14, KO 10) and they made Pryor a superstar. Sadly, just as he'd reached the pinnacle of his profession, cocaine addiction began to drag him down. Pryor gave up the WBA belt after the second Arguello victory, and fought sparingly after that, having just six more bouts spread out over the next six years, the last of which came in December '90. He eventually lost all his money and spent time in prison on drug charges. Things have been marginally better in recent years. Pryor, who claims to have kicked his drug habit, was elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1996 and is a regular at Canastota on induction weekends. He's back living in the Cincinnati projects that spawned him and currently works as a trainer. Considering his lifestyle, it's remarkable Pryor achieved as much as he did, leaving an overall pro record of 39-1 (35).

LENNOX LEWIS

"Holyfield Is There For The Taking"

IN AN AGE when heavyweight boxing seems to be dominated by farce, sleaze, and cannibalism, Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis offer the sport rare glimpses of purity. Holyfield, the warrior king, has battled heroically against prohibitive odds to topple giants and cement a reputation that is beyond question. Lewis has been defeated only once, by Oliver McCall, in what many believe to be a hasty referee's decision. He avenged that defeat last year, and emerged once and for all from the shadow of the garbage can by destroying Andrew Golota in one round last October.

When Lewis and Holyfield meet, fight fans will be in danger of believing that they have slipped back to a time when men were men and fights were ... well, fights.

While Holyfield's numerous appearances on the late-night talk show circuit have made him a familiar figure, Lewis remains an enigma in and out of the ring. Possessed with the most natural talent his trainer, Emanuel Steward, claims to have ever seen in a heavyweight, he has struggled to convert potential into dominance throughout his entire career. After demolishing Golota in 95 seconds, the fourth-fastest stoppage in a heavyweight title fight ever, Lewis now stands on the threshold of achieving the great things for which he seemed destined.

Anyone else would have probably jumped up and down and through the roof of the Atlantic City Convention Hall after overcoming Golota so quickly and emphatically. Lewis? He just smiled. Whether in the ring or out, Lewis keeps his emotions well in check. He says that having his name splashed across the front page of national newspapers is not for him. His private life is jealously protected, in sharp contrast to heavyweight champions of the not too distant past. He's colorful enough, humorous enough, and intelligent enough to handle the publicity. But he enjoys his life away from the spotlight too much to lay it open for prying eyes to see.

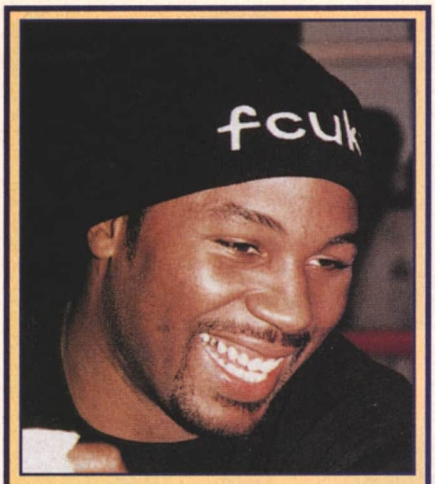
What most of the boxing world sees in Lewis now is the immediate future of the heavyweight division. Despite early odds from the Las Vegas sports books that make Holyfield a slight favorite, Lewis, 32-1 (26), is regarded by many as the undisputed heavyweight champion-in-waiting. Holyfield's stature as one of the all-time greats is assured, but in Lewis, he may encounter one obstacle that even as tenacious a fighter as "The Real Deal" finds too difficult to overcome.

Naturally, that's the way Lewis, 32, sees it as he looks forward to a fight he says is the most significant in boxing today. European correspondent Brian Doogan interviewed Lewis at the studios of London Weekend Television in England's capital, where the champion had just conducted a live and convivial interview for the BBC. Though Doogan got lost and arrived an hour late for the interview, Lewis didn't seem to care.

Doogan reports: "Turning up late for an interview is usually a sure way to anger a world-class athlete. Turning up an hour late when it's the heavyweight champion of the world is unsettling for a reporter indeed. But midway through a meek apology, Lewis brushed it off with a 'That's okay,' before sitting down for longer than the original interview was planned. That's class.

"Lewis' calm presence is probably the

LENNOX



"[Before fighting Riddick Bowe] the relevant authorities would have to clear him and make it clear that if I did any damage to him, I wouldn't be responsible."

Following his knockout of Razor Ruddock in 1992, Lewis' career progress seemed to stall. After being named WBC heavyweight king, Lennox's first three defenses were against Tony Tucker, Frank Bruno, and Phil Jackson. His next defense, against Oliver McCall, should have been just as easy.

most lasting impression of being in his company. That, and his size. Guarded at first, probably due to his private disposition, Lewis gradually became more open as the chat developed. The best heavyweight in the world? Maybe. A nice guy? Certainly."

Interview conducted November 1997

Q: You believed you would go in and walk right through Andrew Golota. After what he inflicted on Riddick Bowe during those two brutal fights, what made you so confident?

A: Just looking at the fact that I'm a little better fighter than Riddick Bowe and certain people had to hold me back. They brought along Andrew Golota, who basically made his name off Riddick Bowe. He had this reputation for having a rough, tough attitude, but I just wanted to make a statement, to show that I'm the man they're ducking. I'm the man who's out there, I'm the best heavyweight in the world and will soon prove it. Before the Golota fight; I was asked how I was going to fight him. I said I was just going to go out and hit him, simple as that. I like to make reality out of what I say.

Q: To make reality out of your declaration that you are the best heavyweight in the world, you have to fight Evander Holyfield.

A: He has no other place to go. If he were to fight a Mickey Mouse fight, it would be a waste of time. Me and Evander Holyfield is the best and most significant fight in boxing, bar none.

Q: If you were to dissect Holyfield for us, what weakness do you see in him that you might exploit?

A: I see that he hasn't seen anyone like me. I see that he doesn't know me. When he looks into my eyes, he's not going to see a beaten man. I enjoyed very much the fight he had with Michael Moorer, not the least because it eliminated the possibility of Moorer avoiding me. But it is obvious to me that Holyfield is there for the taking. I said before he fought Moorer that I would knock him out in three rounds. I have seen nothing to make me change my opinion. When I fight Evander Holyfield, I'm going to weigh 240. He's going to be 218, and that's top weight. I'm a

Lewis knocked out Riddick Bowe in the 1988 Olympic Games, which may explain why Riddick tried so hard to avoid him as a pro. We don't think it's Bowe in that Riddick-ulous costume. He's too short.

Even after his stunning defeat to McCall in 1994 (left), when Don King ingratiated himself to the new WBC titlist (right), Lewis kept a positive point of view. Afterward, he'd deal with King only when it benefited him.

natural heavyweight. I was an Olympic super heavyweight champion. I have that pedigree.

Q: Isn't it true that you had a bit of an altercation with Ben Johnson, the disgraced Canadian sprinter, at the Olympics.

A: Yeah, there was bit of a set-to. Basically, we were in the Olympic Village, and Ben Johnson didn't have his credentials with him that all athletes have to wear around their neck. I said I would go and get his. When I came back he was downstairs shooting pool or something and wires got crossed. I thought he would come up to collect the badge, and he was waiting at the bottom of the stairs. He thought I was fooling around. So when we did meet again finally there was a little pushing or what have you. But I think he recognized his limit.

Q: Of course, you were teammates at the Olympics. How difficult was it for Canadian competitors after the drug issue came to light in Seoul?

A: Well, after I beat Riddick Bowe in the super heavyweight final, an official stepped up onto the ring apron and ushered me away so fast that I thought I was on drugs! But it was a bad time for Canadian athletes at those games.

Q: Do you think the British/Canadian issue has finally been laid to rest with you now?

A: It's old hat. I'm past worrying about it, like water off a duck's back. Canada, Britain, Jamaica. People can make up their own mind, think what they want. I'm British. I fought for Canada in the Olympics. Where's the problem? The problem as I see it is that I was a super heavyweight in the Olympics. Evander Holyfield was a light heavyweight. Natural heavyweights should be heavyweight champion of the world, not artificial ones.

Q: He's done pretty well for an artificial heavyweight.

A: I say that in kindness.

Q: He managed to come back and beat another super heavyweight, Riddick Bowe, in their second fight.

A: Who is Riddick Bowe? Golota showed the world who Riddick Bowe is. I showed the world who Lennox Lewis is by beating Golota. Now Holyfield, who's been lying in a comfortable position for a while, though I know he has the heart of a tiger, wants to push himself to the limit. The limit is going to be Lennox Lewis.

Q: You mention Bowe there. Panos Eliades, your financial backer and London promoter, says that's still the fight you want. Is this true?

A: The relevant authorities would have to clear him and make it clear that if I did any damage to him, I wouldn't be held responsible because it would be that kind of situation. It's bad enough that his sister beats him up, now he's turned into a wife-beater. I will look on a fight against Bowe as a challenge. But there's a deeper thing as well that might get in the way and cause some serious damage. (In May 1997, Bowe filed a police report saying his sister, Velma L. Melton, had assaulted him. In August, a court commissioner in Prince George's County issued a criminal summons charging Bowe with assaulting his wife at their Fort Washington, Maryland, home.)

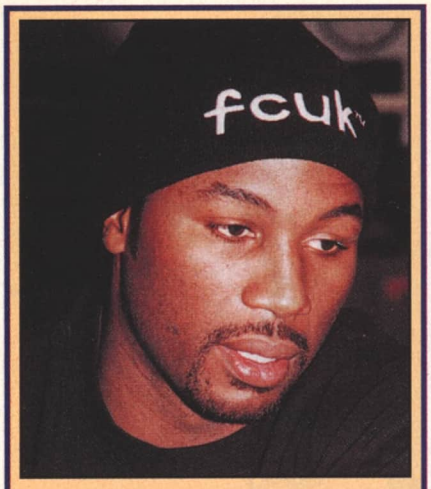
Q: There's still deep animosity between the two of you.

A: Yeah, I mean I'm not the kind of person to forget. If the opportunity to have some retribution arises, I'll take advantage. If you're going to say the kind of things he said about me, you are going to have to back them up. So all I'm saying is that I remember and I want to see him back them up.

Q: Is Mike Tyson a man you would like to fight?

A: Well, he would have to eat first *(laughs)*. If he wants to stay in boxing, me and him would make a great matchup. But I think he's got a lot of problems, and even now he's got himself into that motorcycle accident. If I was him, I wouldn't come back, because I would see myself as being fat enough (having enough money). I think he should just cool and start working for the betterment of himself and man *(laughs)*.

Q: That would seem to be your new philosophy in relation to Don King, that both you and him can work for the betterment of each other. You once checked out of a hotel at 7 a.m. after King had arranged a



"When I fight Evander Holyfield, I'm going to weigh 240. He's going to be 218, and that's top weight. I'm a natural heavyweight. I was an Olympic super heavyweight champion. I have that pedigree."

Lewis is as nonchalant about his quick kayo of Andrew Golota as he is about darn near everything. The way the WBC titlist figures it, Golota's early exit was the natural course of events.

meeting in the breakfast room for 8 a.m. Why the change of heart?

A: I wouldn't call it a change of heart. Although it goes against the grain to make deals with Don King after all that has gone on in the past, sometimes you have to be practical. What do I want most in my career? I want to be undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. So if I had to give some options to King on future fights, so be it. I've had to play boxing politics for too long. It's my time now.

Q: What are your feelings for Don King?

A: Don King hasn't hurt me. He's tried to hurt me with pen and paper, freezing me out of minor situations. But while he thinks he's doing me a bad, it's actually done me good. Even when the whole situation occurred and the Oliver McCall slipup happened, and he kept me away from the picture for a while. While he was doing that, he was enabling me to grow mentally and physically. I got a new trainer and I've mentally stepped up several levels.

Q: But do you regard the five years between your knockout of Razor Ruddock and your destruction of Golota as something of a waste?

A: Not in the slightest. I'm a much improved fighter. I have a better trainer in Emanuel Steward (until the defeat by McCall, Lewis was trained by Pepe Correa, who followed original pro trainer John Davenport). And I'm still here chasing my goals.

Q: But you might have achieved them in those five years.

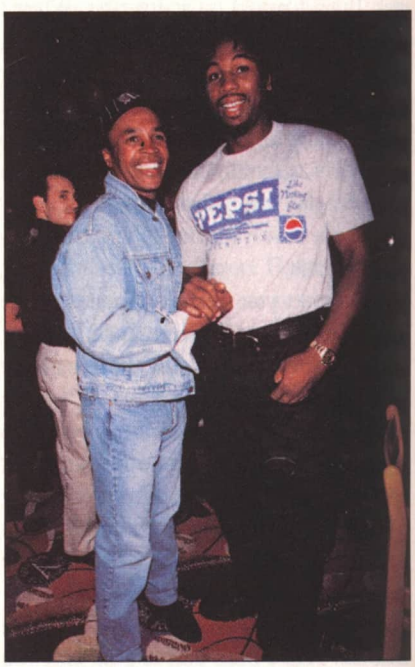
A: It will happen soon enough.

Q: Emanuel Steward says that you're the best heavyweight he's ever seen, including Muhammad Ali. How do you feel about that?

A: It's a great compliment that he has paid me. He's got confidence in me that helps me and makes me feel good about myself. But there's only one Muhammad Ali, and it will be realized soon that there's only one Lennox Lewis.

Q: Steward also says you play too much chess in the ring and that it's unhealthy for a fighter because chess is a game that demands analysis rather than instinct.

A: Well, that's one thing he's wrong on *(laughs)*. He's obviously been proved



Although he's pleased to pose with celebrities like Sugar Ray Leonard, Lewis zealously guards his private life and likes to escape to Jamaica between fights, where he can elude the spotlight.

rong, because I played chess the whole me leading up to the Golota fight, even in e dressing room.

: Just being financially analytical for a oment, isn't the amount of tax you have pay through living in Britain prohibi-ve?

: It is a necessary evil. The one man you n never get away from is the tax man. So any great men were brought down by the x man, *(raises voice)* but I will not be one *laughs again).* Besides, my family is here, nd it is important to be with them.

: You are also involved with the Lennox ewis College for underprivileged inner-ity kids here in London. Tell us a little bout that.

: I've come to a situation that now allows e to be Lennox Lewis, heavyweight cham-ion of the world. I just want to give other ids, whatever their dreams are, the opportu-ity to accomplish those dreams, showing hem I've already done it. Here's a college, a ehicle which will help you in that direction. 've been sponsoring it for two years, and it kes a lot of money to sustain a college. So e want to get a loan or grant from the gov-rnment so that the college's future is ecured. For if I lose my next fight, then what appens to the kids? The main thing for me is st seeing the kids in a situation where their earning is continued and there's government elp or outside help from somewhere.

: And maybe lessons by Master Lewis omeday?

: Maybe boxing lessons *(laughs).*

: Despite your home being in London, our Jamaican origins are very important o you. What does being there give you?

: When I go to Jamaica, I'm far more elaxed, more free and more into nature. In he morning, when I'm running on the each, I can go for a swim, go down to the narket, buy some fresh fish caught that day, ome back and cook it. If I'm thirsty, I go et a coconut from a tree. Everything is resh. I'm totally at one with myself. That's what it does for me.

: You like cooking then?

: I don't mind it. But if it was my choice, 'd leave it to the woman *(laughs).*

: No, seriously, what do you cook?

: Spaghettis, pastas, fish, nothing too ancy, but good to eat.

: How are you received in Jamaica?

: I would actually say I'm embraced by the eople.

Holyfield and Tyson are two heavyweights against whom Lewis would love to prove himself. Lewis believes it's in Tyson's best interest, though, not to return to boxing.

Q: Who still allow you to do your own thing?

A: Very much so. The only time the situation is disturbed is when a visitor, say an American, comes along, notices me, and says, "Hey there's Lennox Lewis, man, over there." Then it might get a little hectic. But mostly it's just cool, laying around and listening to music. I love music. Music has to be around me all the time, whether in the car or in training or before a fight. It helps me relax.

Q: You do seem a very placid individual. What is it that brings out the best in you?

A: My competitive instincts. If me and you were walking down the street, and all of a sudden you started walking a bit faster and leading the way, I'll think, *I can't have this.* So I start speeding up, and it becomes a race, and then it's a challenge. It's like win by whatever means. There are different incentives for different people. Some people want to be champion of the world and some just want to make a lot of money. Some people just like to be called champ.

Q: Do you enjoy that?

A: Well, it's a name I'm particularly used to *(laughs).* It becomes part of my whole day with people at camp saying, "Hey, Champ, how are you doing?"

Q: What are your goals now?

A: I just want the fights that will give me what I came into boxing for: those three heavyweight belts. After I've accomplished that, I'll go after some new goal, probably go be a good dad.

Q: You seem tranquil enough to be a doting dad. What keeps you so serene?

A: Just living the experiences of life through Lennox Lewis' eyes *(laughs).*

LEWIS UPDATE

Lewis had to wait until March 1999 to get a fight with Holyfield, only to become the victim of a scandalous decision when the bout, which Lewis dominated, was ruled a draw. They fought again in November, with Lewis winning a close decision to unify the heavyweight title for the first time since 1992. Following a trio of successful defenses, Lewis lost the title when Hasim Rahman knocked him out in a huge upset in April '01. He regained the title in November, clearing the way for a mega-money showdown with Tyson. When they met on June 8, 2002, in Memphis, Tennessee, Lewis handed Tyson a thorough thrashing before knocking him out in the eighth round. Despite admitting that it would have been a perfect time to bow out, the 37-year-old Lewis, 40-2-1 (31), has decided to keep fighting. As of this writing, he is likely to fight either Tyson again or Vitali Klitschko next.

LARRY HOLMES

"There Ain't Anybody Gonna Beat Me For Another Two Years"

THE LAST UNDISPUTED heavyweight champion of the world? Leon Spinks, of course.

Fifty years from now, the chances are good that the answer will remain the same and the question will be asked again and again in tests of trivia. Fitting, because it is trivial, indeed. As long as Larry Holmes is active and undefeated, he will be the one and only heavyweight champion. The heavyweight title is the only one in boxing that cannot be controlled by organizing bodies, commissions, or the back-room politics of the game. Because of what the title symbolizes, the public demands there be only one king. And since 1978, because of his skills, accomplishments, and consistency, Larry Holmes has reigned supreme.

Perhaps the ultimate testimony to Holmes' status is his recent resignation of the WBC crown and acceptance of the title of the fledgling International Boxing Federation. Opting to reject promoter Don King's offer of $2.5-million to defend against top-rated and mandatory challenger Greg Page, Holmes relinquished his title—before the WBC took it away. But until Holmes' WBC successor or the WBA champion, Gerrie Coetzee, defeats him, Holmes will be recognized as number one.

At 45-0 with 32 kayos, and with 17 successful defenses, Holmes looks toward a final multimillion-dollar showdown with Coetzee and then retirement. As a fighter and champion, the ony question he has left unanswered is whether he will join Rocky Marciano as the only heavyweight king to retire undefeated.

Steve Farhood traveled to Holmes' office at the Larry Holmes Commodore Inn in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, and spoke with the champion about his break with longtime promoter King, plans for a Coetzee bout, and the state of the game of boxing. He found Holmes to be relaxed, candid, and confident.

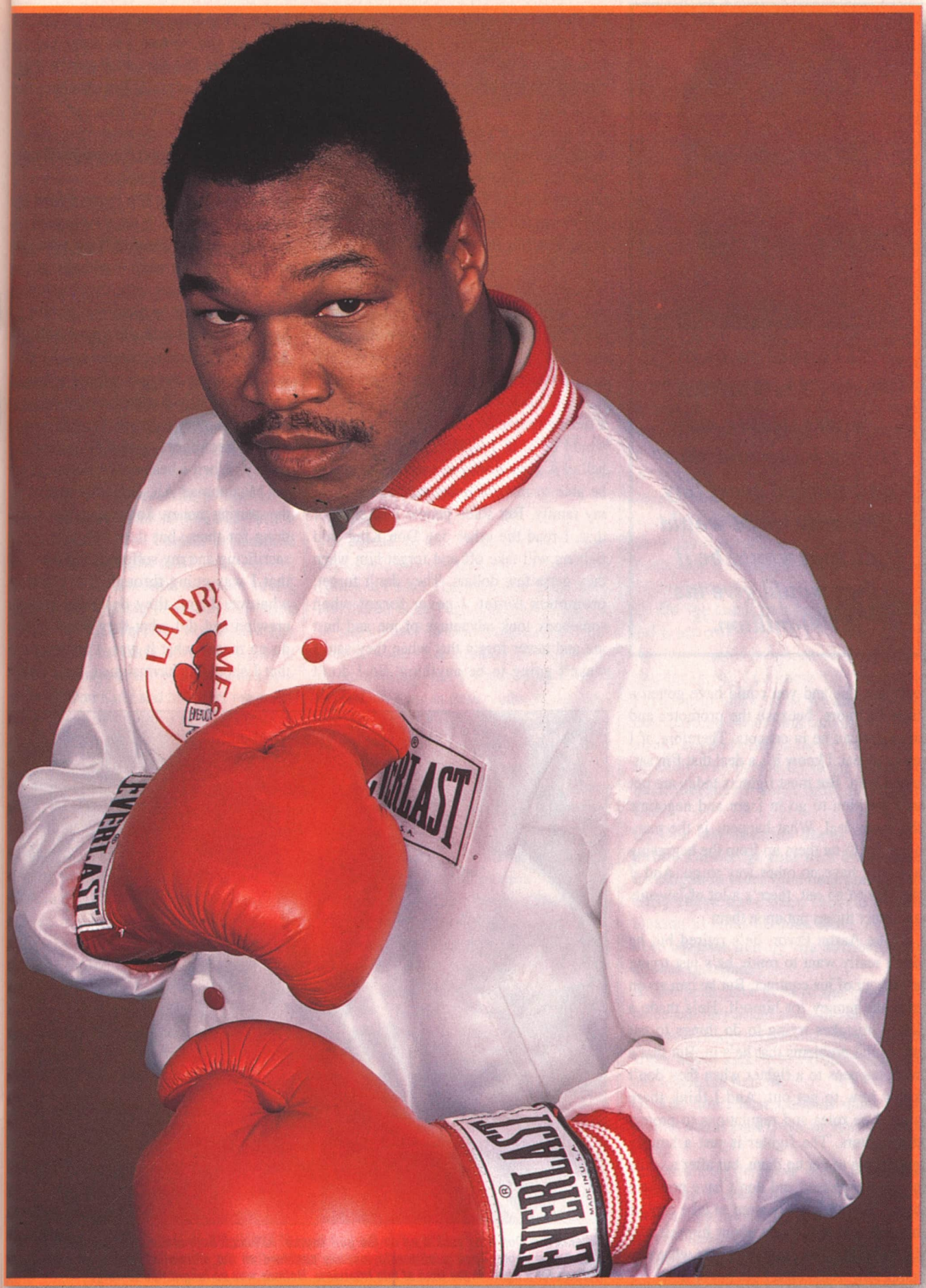
Interview conducted February 1984

Q: There was an interesting story in *USA Today* about you. One of your quotes was that the pressure of Don King is no longer on you. What exactly did you mean? What were you referring to?

A: When one guy is managing and promoting me, it's kind of difficult to fight someone who's also being managed and promoted by the same guy. It makes it difficult to go into the ring because the only one who ever really loses in this business is the fighter. The promoters never lose—that's why I said the pressure was lifted, because I can go in and fight a Don King fighter and if I lose I know that I lost, but if I win I know that I won. It difficult when you're fighting in a no-win situation. That's what my whole career has been like, a no-win situation.

Q: In wanting to promote your own fights and handle your own business affairs, doesn't that put extra pressure on you?

A: It's putting pressure on me, but once I do it I know it's done. If I accept a deal, I know it's my deal and I go along with it. When a manager and a promoter go into a deal, the fighter never knows what the deal is all about. A manager can say you've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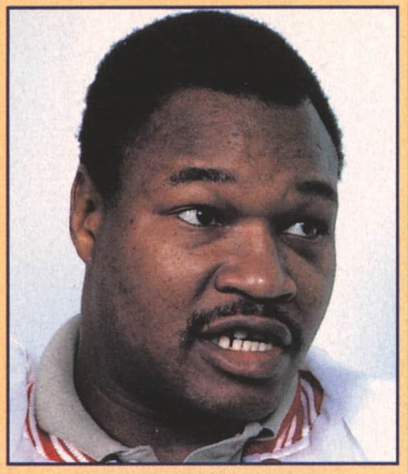


"I cannot go over there [South Africa] where people are being hung and shot and starved every day. The only way I would do that would be if they would give me $100-million."

only got this and you could have gotten a little bit more, because the promoter and manager can be in cahoots. Therefore, if I make a deal, I know it's a deal that I'm satisfied with. But most fighters today are not in a position to go in there and negotiate the same deal. What happens is the managers try to tie them up from the beginning and they have no other way to go. And if they try to go out, there's a lot of lawsuits and other things put upon them.

Like Aaron Pryor, he's retired but he don't really want to retire, he's just trying to get out of his contract. But he can go on to make money for himself. He's made a lot of mistakes trying to do things to get out of the problems that he's in. But that's what happens to a fighter when they don't know how to get out. And I think there should be rules and regulations to protect the fighters. The fighter is just a hungry guy trying to get up there, but after a while he gets depressed and don't have nowhere to go. He don't really want to take care of himself and don't care about himself and falls into that hole. And that was what was happening to me until I got out of it.

Q: Do you feel a fighter ever owes a promoter anything? The promoter takes him from the start and makes him a champ, giving him the chance to earn a lot of money.

A: Fighters don't owe nobody nothing. He owes everything to himself, because the promoter don't take the risks; the fighter takes the risks. The promoter don't take the punch; the fighter takes the punch. The promoters put in your head that this is a sport. They don't look at it like a business, because when you lose sight of it, what is real, then you become a nothing—that's what promoters tell you. Don King has told me that it's not a business for me, it's a business for him. You don't want to say it, but it's black and white, it's a business, a money business, and if it wasn't, no one would be in it. I wouldn't be in it for the hell of it, for a trophy or medal, I'm in it to be able to make a living and take care of my family. But some people lose sight of that. I read the other day Don King said fighters will take off and forget him when they get a few dollars. They don't forget; promoters forget. I never forgot when somebody took advantage of me and hurt me and never forgot that when they said I wasn't going to be anything. So I don't forget. They hope you forget, they want to persuade you, to turn you around and get you thinking like they want you to think. I don't think that way, I made them think that I thought that way because I was trying to get into the division. Now that I'm in the division, I don't have to do that anymore. I'm telling it like it is.

Q: You've been in the game a long time now, so you know a lot about what goes on outside the ring. When you were starting and you were working your way up, did you realize then that boxing was not a sport, but a business, or did you have a different attitude about it then?

A: I had a different attitude, but I knew it was a business because when I was being trained by Ernie Butler; he tried to tie me up for a number of years. We had to go to court, because I wasn't making any money. When I became a sparring partner for Muhammad Ali, Ernie wanted half of the sparring money. So it was always something for them, but they forgot about my sacrificing and my suffering and the things that I was going through. They felt that whatever I got, they deserved it. I just crawled and did what they wanted me to do no matter what it was. I signed papers that I shouldn't have signed, but it was to

Holmes and Don King yuck it up on the golf course. Although both made a lot of money together, they had a contentious relationship, usually centered on the amount of money King would pay Holmes for a fight. At the time of this interview, Holmes was no longer tied to King.

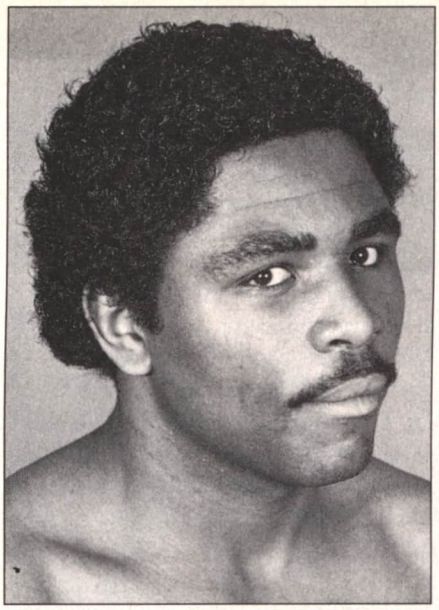
get into the position because they use and manipulate you.

That's one of the reasons why I try my best to set an example for other fighters, because they don't know about all of this scheming. To have somebody take it away from you is not right. That's what managers and promoters try; they try to take 50 percent of the money, and then the government takes 50 percent, and you don't have anything left. Earnie Shavers, I understand, lost his house, a $700,000 house. Why should a guy like Earnie Snavers, who made all this money fighting, why should Muhammad Ali lose money or Joe Louis, or any of the fighters who made money, lose money? Because people put them into the position of owing and having to pay back, not teaching them, not educating them, and that's what hurts them in the end.

Q: If Don King were the promoter to make the best offer to you for future fights, whether it be Coetzee or someone else, would you agree to it?

A: Well yeah, I would do it because I know I'm not going to get into his trick bag anymore. Don King don't have any rights to me, he don't have any rights to take my money, so if I go in there and do a deal with Don King and he offers me a certain amount of money and I accept that, that's a different story. But if I don't feel that the price is right, I'm not going to accept it. For instance, the Greg Page fight: Don King tried to force me to fight Greg Page for $2.2-million at first, then he kept coming back and he finally got to $2.55-million with expenses. To me, that was being underpaid. Here I get $4.5-million for two fights against Scott Frank and Marvis Frazier, and he wants me to fight the number-one contender for $2-million. It's absurd. Why should I do that when they're giving me $4-million to fight a guy named John Tate? So it's business to me, too, it's not only a sport. It's not that I'm trying to get around Greg Page. I just want to be compensated for fighting him.

Is it so important to have your name and a Don King promotion up on the top, or is it more important to do right for boxing? If he thinks that the money is not going to generate, that we're going to lose money, then don't do it. Let me promote it—that's my offer. Greg Page, I don't know your contract, I don't know what



Greg Page (pictured) was among the contenders that King wanted Holmes to fight, but Holmes didn't like the purse King was offering and nixed the match.

you agreed to, but whatever your contract says, I will pay you that, and whatever else comes in I take. That eliminates Don King, and then if Greg Page happens to beat me, he can go back to Don King and do whatever he wants. But don't try to sway me to do something that I know ain't right. I know Don King is going to be on the sideline praying that Greg Page kicks my ass. There are things that he said that he shouldn't have said, like he clothed me, he taught me, and made me. If I go by everything that he had done and the way he's done it, you would have wondered why I stayed with him for 11 years. He said that I didn't thank him for putting me in the position. I shouldn't have to thank him when he made $20-million from me.

Should I name my son Don just because this South African wants to do it? I don't want to do it, I'm not a hypocrite. If I say that I don't like something that's going on in a place, I'm not going to deal with that something. And what he's tried to do to me is make me hate Gerrie Coetzee, hate the South Africans, hate everything about him. I can only hate what's going on over there, I can't hate a person for being a South African. I can't hate Gerrie Coetzee for being a South African. We have no decision on where we are born, or what color we are, that's God's work. And if he's trying to make it better, you praise him. When I make a stand against apartheid, then I have to make it against him also. I cannot be a champion shaking his hand when he goes back to South Africa after every fight. I can't be a part of that, I can't be a hypocrite. But as far as him fighting me, I have to fight him here in the United States. I cannot go over there where people are being hung and shot and starved every day. The only way I could do that would be if they would give me a $100-million. Then I could donate $50-million to the blacks so they could get out of poverty a little bit. That is the only way I could do that.

Q: In the *USA Today* story you said that King is scared of what you will put in your upcoming autobiography, that he is scared of what you know and might say. What do you know that is so dangerous to him?

A: It might be dangerous in a court of law, because managers do a lot of things they shouldn't do. What I said is that it will show the real truth, the real color of Don King, how he's exploiting fighters, how all the managers do it.

Q: Do you think he's been guilty of illegal practices?

A: I can't say if he's been guilty of illegal practice or not. I do know if he tried to do anything to block me, I would lay it out. So I have no bones about saying anything about anybody and I never did. That's probably why people try to put me in the back, because I don't mind telling the truth.

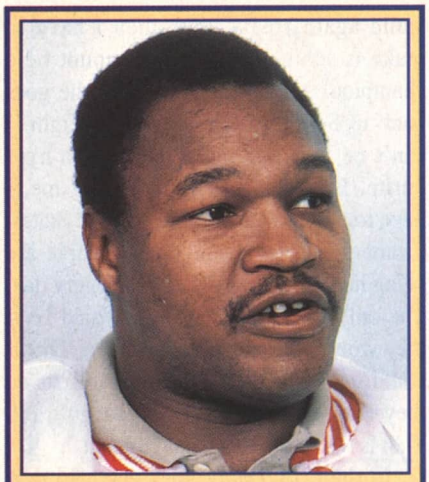
Q: One last question about King. It's public knowledge that he's been under investigation more than once and apparently there have been federal people looking at what he does. Have you ever been approached by the authorities to answer questions?

A: Oh yeah, I've been to the grand jury twice and they asked about the same things that everybody asks about. They want to know about kickbacks, about promoting and managing fighters.

Q: You don't hear quite as many complaints about Dan Duva as you do about King.

A: Duva's on the lower scale. Don is out there, he's loud and he's black. Even though they say it's a free country, it's not for the blacks.

Q: Boxing doesn't have that many rules because it doesn't have that much orga-



"The WBC has played the game with sanctioning. I don't care about the game that they play. I honor the game, but I want to be compensated for playing the game."

nization. But one of the rules that does seem to make sense and has been around for a long time is that champions have to defend against number-one challengers. From a financial viewpoint, it probably made sense that you fought Scott Frank and Marvis Frazier. But wouldn't it have been fair for you to have also given Greg Page a shot at your title?

A: The rules are made for people to follow and I don't go against that rule, but my position is a little different. Let's go back to May 20, when I fought Tim Witherspoon. You had no number-one contender; Greg Page was not the number-one contender. When I fought Gerry Cooney, he was the number-one contender. I beat him, and then there was Page and Trevor Berbick. Berbick fought Page, beat him, therefore Berbick is the number-one contender. Berbick lost to Snipes, Snipes is the number-one contender. They didn't have a number-one contender until after May, when Page beat Snipes. My mandatory comes up in June, so the next month I'm going to go back and fight Page because he's the number-one contender? Or do I have till June of 1984 to do it? The WBC has played the game with sanctioning. I don't care about the game that they play. I honor the game, but I want to be compensated to play the game. That's the only problem that I have. At the time I was allowed to fight anybody I wanted until June for my mandatory, so there's this guy Scott Frank that I'm allowed to fight, but they didn't sanction Marvis Frazier. They didn't recognize it or sanction it, but they said if I lost, I lost my title; but they did not recognize it. They played games.

Q: Traditionally, there's no such thing as a non-title fight for a heavyweight champion. Whether the fight is sanctioned or not, if he loses a fight, he loses his title.

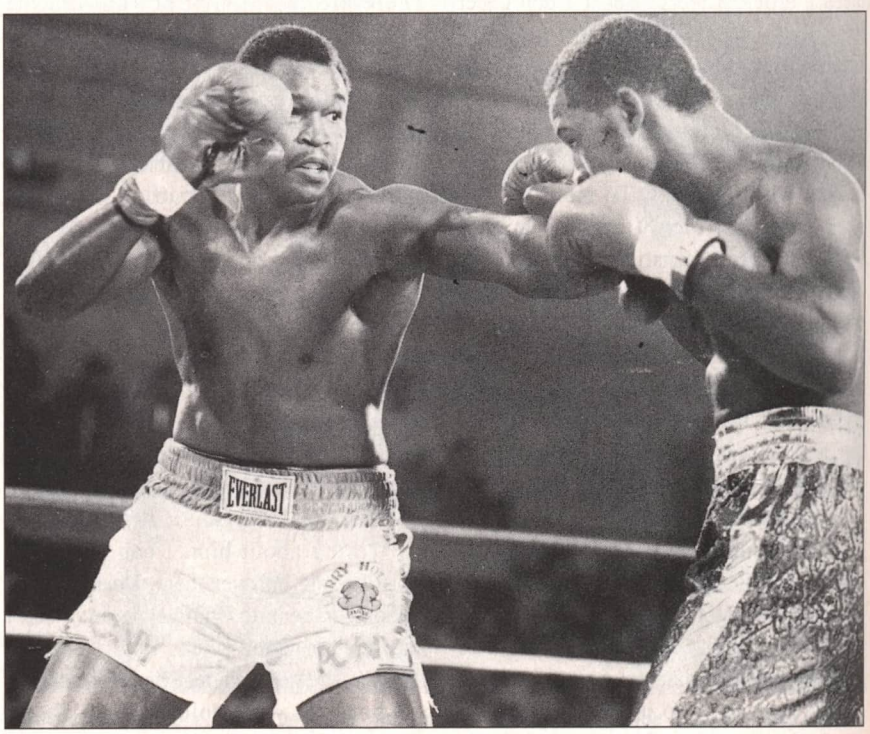
A: Right. So then they come back and tell me that I've got to fight Greg Page, who just became number one, fine. The mandatory comes up in June. Don't threaten to take my title. I'll resign. Take your phony s___ and shove it. The WBC is going to say it made me. I've got 45 fights and 45 wins. I made the WBC for the six years I've been champion—that's when the WBC started getting the recognition. And they take hundreds of thousands of dollars from me, 2½ percent out of my pocket. It's a lot of money for me to pay for them to say, "Okay go ahead and fight this guy."

Q: Was it a hard decision to relinquish the title?

A: It was a hard decision to do, but a harder decision not to do because I would have caused a lot of problems. I think the WBC and WBA are good for boxing, because it needs rules; fighters won't fight certain fighters. You have to have rules, but I just don't want to be pointed out as one of the guys who avoids the rules. Do you know I fought four times last year? You know who is regarded as the fighter of the year—Camacho. Why? I'm not bitter, he's a good fighter, but he's fighter of the year? Why? Because Don King is playing games. Why is Bobby Chacon an asshole? Because Don King don't have him. Why is Michael Dokes an asshole? Because he asks for money from the T-shirts with his name on them. Why does he call Duran an ingrate, and say he ain't s___? Because he went over to Bob Arum after Don King washed him out. Why is Larry Holmes s___? Because Larry Holmes isn't kissing his ass anymore.

Q: If Don King had been the promoter of the Marvis Frazier fight, do you think Marvis would have slipped into the top-10 of the WBC?

A: More than likely. They got ways of doing a lot of things. Everything is not on the up and up.



Although Holmes fought a lot of tough challengers during his reign, Marvis Frazier, whom Holmes knocked out in the first round in November 1983, wasn't one of them.

Q: Fighters have slipped in before in every division.

A: Leon Spinks only had eight fights before he fought for the title.

Q: So the possibility exists the WBC would have made an exception had King promoted it.

A: It's logical.

Q: When a champion, like yourself, is universally recognized and has proven himself as the best in his division, do you feel that he becomes bigger than the organizations that run boxing? Especially in the case of the heavyweight champion?

A: I would say so. I think you have more to say about the organization. I think he has a little more to say about the rules and regulations in boxing. Take the WBC rule in which it made the 12-round championship fights. The ESPN or the NABF title is 12 rounds, so they're reducing the importance of the heavyweight championship. You're making it amateur. If someone can't sustain 15 rounds, then he's not really a champion. I won the title going 15 rounds with Ken Norton and it turned out to be one of the greatest fights in boxing history. If it were 12 rounds, it might not have been one of the greatest fights. You wouldn't have had the 15th round. I think boxing shouldn't be changed that drastic. But I think it should be regulated a little better.

For instance, fighters are getting hurt unnecessarily. I'm doing an exhibition in San Diego in a couple of weeks to raise some money to help these kids that got hurt in the ring. Precautions aren't taken to make sure the fighters are examined. And they don't have good doctors. They do not get brain scans because fighters can't afford $400 for it. I think a fighter should have all of this done three times a year.

Q: Is the answer a federal commission, or national control?

A: No. Managers and trainers, promoters and commissions—if they can get it all together, they could have a fund. A certain amount of money from each fight, from the overall promotion, would go into that fund. If a promotion makes $10-million, I think two percent of that money should go into a fund.

Q: By accepting the IBF title, you give the new organization instant credibility. But some of its other champions in other divisions are not the best in the division. Do you think the IBF should be considered on a par with WBA and WBC?

Bob Lee, president of the IBF, straps the organization's belt around Holmes' waist. By accepting the IBF's title, Holmes gave the new alphabet group instant credibility.

A: They don't have the recognition because they are new. I feel it's a good organization now because they don't have the chance to be as corrupt as other organizations. They don't owe any favors right now. That's not saying it's going to be good 10 years down the road, but right now it's the new organization that has the opportunity to be known and recognized, so that's one of the reasons why I went over there. I don't really need a sanctioning body. I don't need anybody to say go ahead and fight, as long as people pay the money and recognize me as champion. But I think the IBF is good not only because the WBC and WBA might have some corruption in them, but also because it gives fighters an opportunity for variety. This is why I welcome Bob Andreoli into boxing as a promoter, and I recommend anybody that has the money to get in it: because it helps fighters. If you don't have a Don King and a Bob Arum, you're screwed. If you don't know which one to go to, you flip a coin. It don't make any difference because they're both the same.

Q: You think the IBF will be able to keep its hands clean and not be influenced by the big promoters?

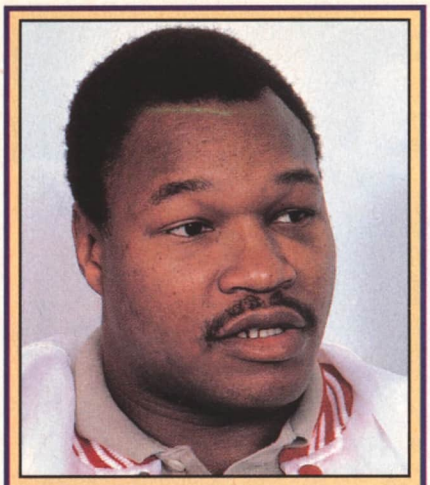
A: For a while.

Q: You think it's inevitable that it won't stay good?

A: As long as they keep a close check on it and keep their rules strict, they'll be all right. They have to do it themselves and they've got to have a strong commission and strong president.

Q: Obviously, Larry Holmes is the number-one heavyweight in the world. List me the next five in order.

A: You shake them up and put them in a basket, they're all the same. There's not really one of those guys that really takes care of himself or dedicates or disciplines himself. Greg Page is 25 and 400 pounds. You want your kids to be like a Greg Page,



"I'm a better person now, I'm a more mature fighter. I don't do a lot of running around the ring and avoid punches and try to be a Muhammad Ali. That's why I say I'm more of a boxer-puncher."

cocky and arrogant? He might be a good fighter, but he's cocky, can't talk to him, thinks he's God's gift. That attitude alone would take you down because God will punish you. Like Michael Dokes: He was a good fighter, a gifted fighter, but what happened? He got struck. Same thing with Coetzee, he's gonna get struck because he represents the wrong thing. He says he's opposed to apartheid, but what happens when he breaks his hand, what does he do after a fight? He goes back home. And what about James Broad—lazy, cocky attitude, tries to put big words together that don't sound right coming out of his mouth. In the heavyweight division you shake them up and put them in a basket. Some might come up. But the world knows that I kick everybody's ass. There ain't anybody going to beat me for another two years.

Q: Do you feel that Coetzee is a better fighter now than when he lost to Tate and Mike Weaver?

A: No, I don't think so. It might be because I'm getting a little older, but I don't see any changes.

Q: One of his problems is that he doesn't have the confidence that a lot of fighters here have. I think the South Africa boxing circles look up to American fighters as gods, and maybe that's one of the reasons why Coetzee lacks confidence. Do you feel that you can beat him before the fight even happens?

A: I never try to do that. People say I do, but I never try to do that. It's just that I change. I think the wear and tear of the fight will get him, because I'm a busy fighter. You ain't gonna wait around, you're going to fight me every second. Tick, tick, tick, you're gonna have to throw punches. If he's lacking in any extent or any condition, he's not going to have a chance.

Q: Describe how you feel the fight would go.

A: Ten rounds. Knock him out in 10 rounds.

Q: At a press conference, he said he would rather fight you—and all of his fights—in the U.S. Why do you think he feels like that?

A: Africa is just a small part of the world, America is all of the world. And he wants to fight here because he wants people to know who he is. He wants people to respect him as a champion, that's why he wants to beat me. They don't know who Gerrie Coetzee is, all white guys look alike, you've heard that before *(laughs)*. I've seen him in Vegas, and nobody knew him.

Q: He also discussed the possibility of purse parity. You went through that with Gerry Cooney. Is there any way you would accept parity if the figures were high enough?

A: If I get what I want, he can get what he wants.

Q: What kind of figure is that?

A: I have no idea yet.

Q: Is that being bounced around now, trying to figure what the fight is worth?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is retiring undefeated right now more or less important to you than it was a year ago?

A: It's always important to me, because I don't want to lose. I never want to lose. Retire undefeated with my faculties good, that's what I work for. I don't want 90 people working for me to say they think their boss is crazy. I don't want my family to go to school and people say your daddy is punched out.

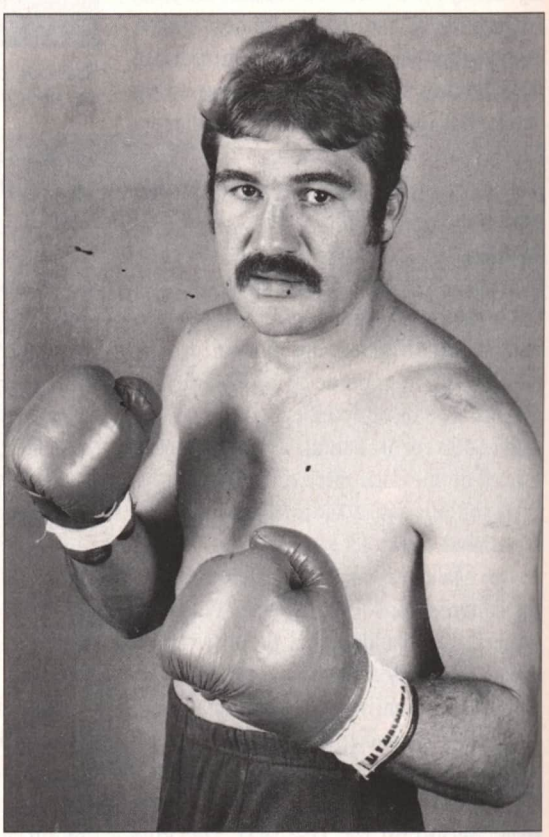
Q: You can lose a fight, and it may not be a case of your having nothing left. You may just outright lose.

A: I'm not going to lose. I can't lose. Nobody out there good enough to make me lose. I can't lose if I overtrain. I overtrained for Witherspoon and he had an opportunity to whip my ass and didn't.

Q: Did you train just about perfectly for Marvis?

A: I did. I went back over the books and checked my stuff out to see where I went wrong. See if I did something I shouldn't have done and did, and purposely I didn't do it. I weighed 220 pounds for Frazier and that's what I want to be for John Tate: 220, 221, no more than 223 for that fight. And for Gerrie Coetzee I want to be 220.

Q: You have gotten smarter as a fighter, which happens with experience. Compare yourself to the fighter you were five years ago. How do you describe the change?



There was a lot of talk about Holmes fighting Gerrie Coetzee (pictured), who Holmes felt lacked confidence. But the fight with the erratic South African never materialized.

A: I'm a better person now, I'm a more mature fighter. I don't do a lot of running around the ring and avoid punches and try to be a Muhammad Ali. I'm more of a boxer-puncher. In other words, I get out and box and move around and dance when I have to. When I don't have to, I'm flatfooted throwing punches. That's why I say I'm more of a boxer-puncher. Like against Frazier, when he went around in circles, I settled down and used a hard jab and kept him from coming in and nailed him with the right hand. And when you know how to box, you get out and circle him, feint him, and let the guy come to you.

Q: Has coming off your toes made you a harder puncher?

A: Yeah.

Q: How close did you come to retiring after the Cooney fight. Did that come into your mind after that fight?

A: No, that was the Frazier fight. I gave everything away after the Frazier fight. I retired and I was going to make my announcement. I gave everything away, gloves, shoes, everything, and that's when I retired.

Q: Why did you change your mind?

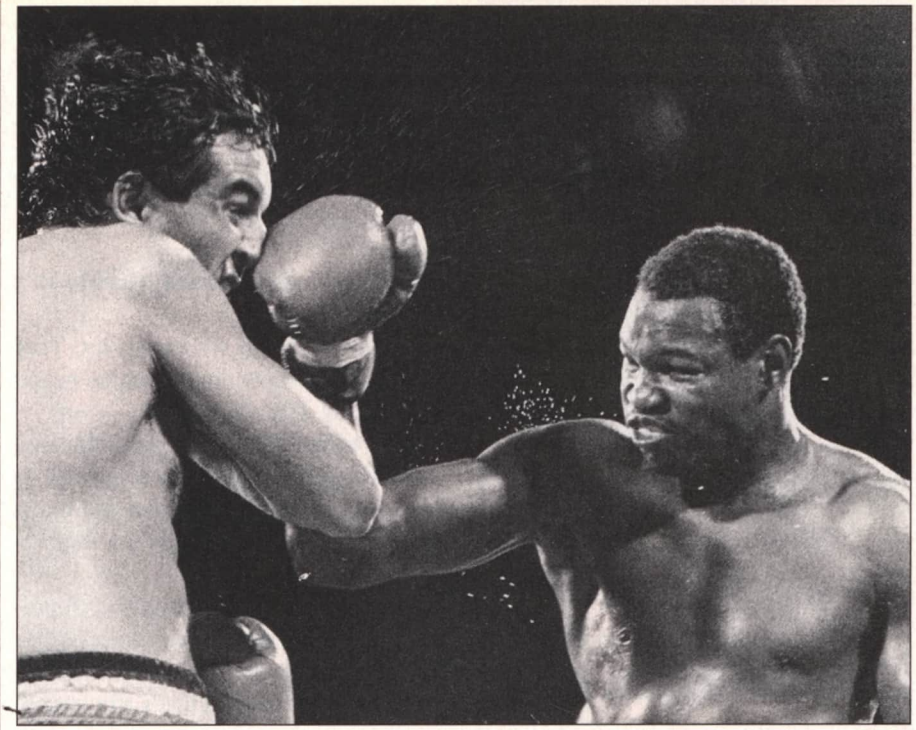
A: People putting pressure on me about the Coetzee situation. Saying it's a black-white fight, a racial fight, that it can be proved that the title belongs in America, and then the check, the possibility of making a lot of money. My record is 45-0 and I'm happy with that record. I don't really have to accomplish any more. I've done it all. How much more can I do? You can count the people on one hand that have their dreams come true, set out for a goal and accomplish it. I've done it, I don't have anything to prove. Only thing left is to knock out these two guys [Tate and Coetzee]. The reason why I took the John Tate fight is the Coetzee fight. If I could take the Coetzee fight now instead of John Tate, I would, but I had to add a fight because of the long gap in between and I like to stay busy. I gain a little weight with aging, and it's kind of hard to get it off.

Q: So you're saying absolutely, positively Coetzee and that's it?

A: As far as I'm concerned, yes.

Q: Is there any way that you could change your mind?

A: I could say right now there's no way I could change my mind. I don't want to change my mind, to be honest with you.



Holmes clips Gerry Cooney on the beak with a right hand during their 1982 title fight that Holmes won via TKO in the 13th round. Holmes claimed he understood when Sports Illustrated *put Cooney, instead of the defending champion, on the cover.*

I've done this s___ 16 years, you get bored and older, and hear the same questions all the time, and it gets kind of hard. But I want to get out of the game after the Coetzee fight. I don't want to hurt nobody. I didn't want to hurt Frazier and bang him up, I knew the kid wasn't quite ready. I'm getting a little concerned about hurting people, because a lot of things have been happening in the fight game and people have been getting hurt. I know I have to be strong to keep me going for at least two more fights. After that I'm going to marry my wife for the second time.

Q: Everyone knows how your wife feels about your future in boxing. When you discuss it with her, is it a long, loud discussion?

A: No, my wife is a beautiful lady. She said she'll do whatever I want, just don't get hurt, and when I quit, quit, don't come back. A lot of people think me and my wife fight a lot. I was boxing when I met my wife, it's not like we just started. We've been together nine years, so she's like an old pro with me. She don't go against me.

Q: There have been a lot of fighters, and Ray Leonard is obviously the latest example, who have come back. Not all of them need the money. Do they come back because of ego?

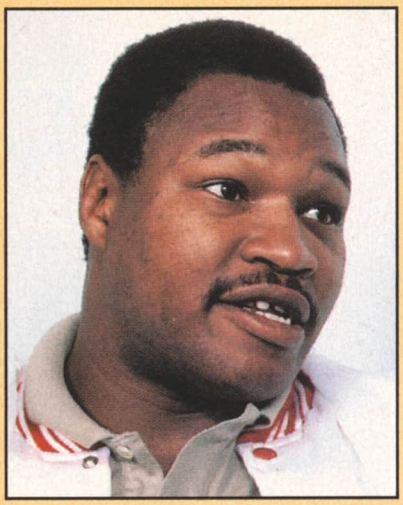
A: A lot of it is ego, a lot of it is boredom. They don't have anything to do. But I'm prepared for the future. I own a parking lot, a night club, a disco. If I'm fed up, to keep me going I'll learn how to tend bar. I'll tell jokes, it keeps me occupied.

Q: You're satisfied doing it. Not everyone can do what you're doing and find it satisfying.

A: I do. Like I take my brother [Mark] to a fight and work in his corner. That's all you need, take a hike somewhere or a trip and when you come back you'll be back to normal. So I get bored once in a while, and when I do I might go down to Atlantic City and roll some dice, and when I come home I'm okay. People have to know that you can't go on forever in the fight game. I'm not naive about this game, I know the dangers and I know that we can get screwed up in this game.

Q: If your son, Larry Jr., came over to you in a few years and said, "Pop, I want to be a fighter," what would your reaction be?

A: I'd ask him if he was sure that's what he wanted to do. I would help him, but I would rather him not to do it. He doesn't need this s___, he don't need to fight. He don't have to do nothing the rest of his life. Everything I saved is in my kids' names. So he don't



"Everybody's been pretty good except for one asshole up in Boston who called me a racist, so I don't deal with him, because it's not true."

have to do that, but if he wants to, I'd rather see him on the football field: That's something I wanted to do, I wanted to run down the sidelines. I'd rather he do that, but he can get hurt in that, too. Whatever he wants to do, tennis player, hockey player, doctor, I'm I going to back him up.

Q: How would you describe, from the beginning of your title reign until now, your relationship with the press?

A: Pretty good, because I've always told the press exactly how I felt, whether they I liked it or they didn't like it. A lot of things, they wrote I didn't like. If they have an opinion, I have one, too. If I don't like one of them, I tell him. And I think overall my relationship has been pretty good because I've been honest, and that's what they want. I don't say, "Go away, I don't want to talk to you." If somebody's screwed me pretty good or made a lot of statements about me that are not true, then I get upset.

Q: For the most part, have they been fair?

A: The New York press, the Philadelphia press, everybody's been pretty good except for one asshole up in Boston who called me a racist, so I don't deal with him, because it's not true.

Q: How about *Sports Illustrated*, when they put Cooney on the cover and you on the inside flap of the issue previewing your fight?

A: I understand that, it's just business. It a was really blown out of proportion when Stallone and Cooney got on the cover [of *Time* magazine], but you got to understand ...

Q: Cooney's going to sell because he's white.

A: People do things for economics. They figure black people don't read the magazine anyway. I can deal with it.

Q: Do you feel deep down inside the need every champion has to prove himself, to keep proving himself? Do you feel that's something that exists, that's a motivational force?

A: They have to prove themselves to people because the people don't believe. But I've learned to say the hell with them, prove myself to me, and that's all I want to do. Because those Johnny-come-latelies, they're here today and gone tomorrow. Don King again is a good example for that. If you can't do for him, he talks about you like you're a dog.

Q: Define greatness in a fighter.

A: When they're born and they become a fighter and they can sustain the things that people put on them. Greatness isn't what everybody thinks it is—knocking out everybody. Greatness is when you can carry yourself and not have to do that s___ out in the street. They can say Larry Holmes could beat Marciano and Louis, that don't mean anything to me because we are all great in our own time. Marciano was great in his time, Joe Louis was great in his time, Ali was great in his time. This is my time. I've been reigning six years, that shows greatness to me. But what puts the icing on the cake is the way you present yourself and respect yourself, that's what greatness is.

Q: Who are the fighters of recent years and today who you would give that label to?

A: I think they're all great fighters. I think Ali was a great fighter, because he's my idol. Joe Louis, 'cause I know these people. The ones I know, Sugar Ray Robinson, I met Dempsey, I thought all of them was great. As far as saying that Ali was greater than Marciano, I don't get into that. I don't rank nobody greater than others because we all are great under God's eyes. Everybody is on a trail we follow, and you have to believe that trail because it's a circle and it

Holmes and his wife, Diane, chat with the media following Holmes' fifth-round kayo of Scott Frank in September 1983. Mrs. Holmes wanted her husband to retire, but supported his decision to fight on.

goes round and round. For instance, let me go back to Jack Johnson, talk on the black side. Johnson represented strength because he did things and went against the system and didn't care what they did. He went into exile trying to get fights and married a white woman. Joe Louis was an American hero because he fought the Germans. Muhammad Ali didn't go into the service because he was great for the people who were against the Vietnam War. He was a Muslim priest and he fought all the systems and he had the mouth. He called white folks devils and he stirred up something. Now Larry Holmes comes. I'm a different type champion than Muhammad Ali or Joe Louis. I'm a different type person than those guys. Ali talked a whole lot of s___, Leon Spinks went to jail every other god-damn day, but I just want to be me. I want to be quiet, humble, and, if somebody gets on my nerves, tell them to get the hell off my back. I don't want to be out there where they're at, they need that, they like that, you get it, fine. If I don't, it don't matter to me. I'm a champion anyway, to myself if to nobody else, to my family. And I can feed my family and that means something to me. This s___, you don't see me up in New York every week trying to get my picture in the paper or on these talk shows. I can be on all those shows, I could be in California. I got movie scripts—they want me to do this movie, or that commercial, endorse this product. But that is not me.

Q: As a heavyweight, you've been the best in the world for a long time. How would you rate yourself as a businessman. Are you still learning?

A: I'm learning how to be an asshole, and I don't like to be that way. If somebody comes in here and needs something, I'm going to say okay. That's the way I would say it, somebody else would say get the hell out. My brother Bob runs this hotel and he has to run it because he's tougher than I am and you've got to be tough. You've got 90 people working and I like to be close to people and he don't. He would, but he's more business, that's the way he is and I can't.

Q: Are you trying to make that adjustment?

A: I want to be hard to an extent, because when I give they keep taking. But I like to deal with the people. I like to sit in a bar and drink beer with them.

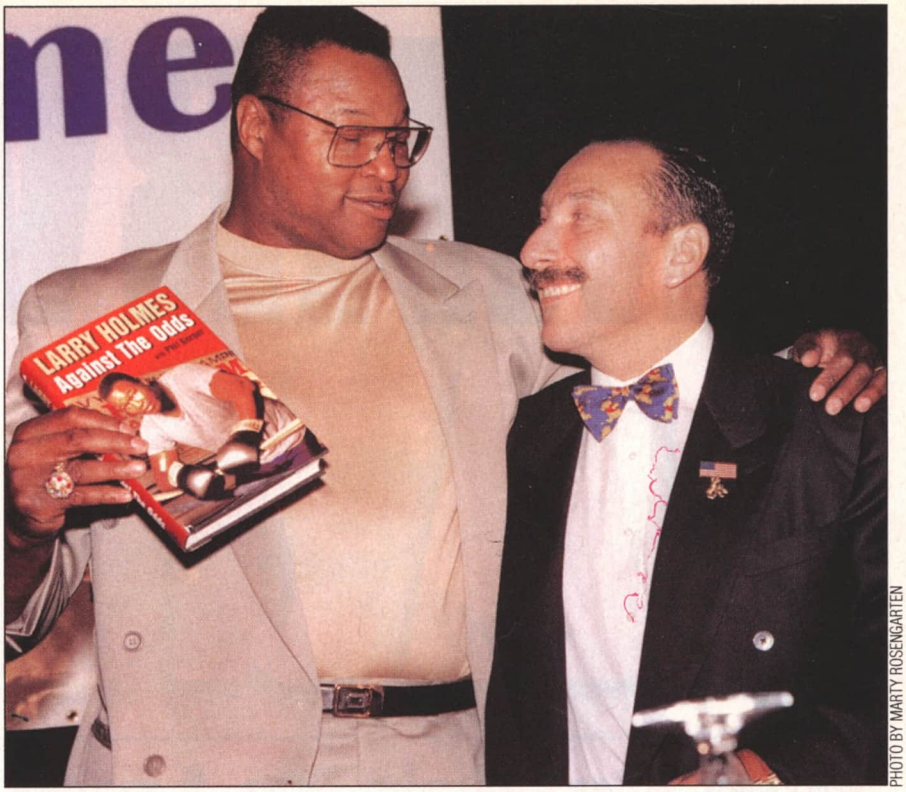


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Holmes was already working on his biography when this interview was conducted in 1984, but it wasn't published until '98. Pictured with Holmes is promoter Roger Levitt.

Q: If there is one thing that you could change in boxing, what would it be?

A: I would change some of the rules and regulations they have. Most of the time you fight for one promoter and then you got 10 options and, the next thing you know, you're tied up for 11 years like I was with Don King. I would change that process. The IBF doesn't honor any options or contracts, and that's one of the good things about it. I would also change some of the rules as far as medical insurance.

Q: Is your autobiography going to be a blockbuster?

A: It's going to be hard, but it's going to be fair. I'm not going to incriminate anybody or tear down anybody's credibility, because people work hard at what they want. If they're con artists, they work hard at being con-artists. If they're assholes, they work hard at being assholes. I don't want to tear anything down that somebody's trying to build. I'm not that way.

Q: If you had a chance to write your own epitaph, what would it say?

A: I would probably call it, "The Truth Of The Man." The reason why is because I'm a man that tells the truth and that's the way I would like to go with it. I'm The Truth of the Man.

HOLMES UPDATE:

Holmes made three more successful defenses after this interview was conducted, turning back the challenges of Bonecrusher Smith (KO 12), David Bey (KO 10), and Carl "The Truth" Williams (W 15). Then, in September 1985, he lost the title to light heavyweight champion Michael Spinks via 15-round decision. After losing another close decision to Spinks the following year, Holmes was inactive until January '88, when he suffered a crushing fourth-round knockout loss to Mike Tyson. Holmes then took another hiatus, returning to action in April '91. He put together a string of wins, including an upset decision over Ray Mercer that earned him a shot at then-heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield. Although he lost a 12-round decision to Holyfield, Holmes fought on, eventually getting a final crack at a belt when he challenged then-WBC titleholder Oliver McCall in April '95. Holmes lost a 12-round decision, but continued to fight sporadically. In 2002, he outpointed Eric "Butterbean"Esch to bring his record to 69-6 (44).

MARVIN HAGLER

"I'm Getting To Love Myself As The Man, Not The Boxer"

THE SETTING WAS appropriate, if not downright symbolic. Driving along the highway, through acre upon acre of Massachusetts woodland ablaze in changing colors, was Marvin Hagler. As he moved through an area of peaceful splendor that was preparing itself for the change of seasons, Hagler was for once at peace with himself. Fortunately for him. For this is a time when his life is undergoing its own change of seasons.

Hagler arrived in his sporting goods store in Hanover, walked to the back, and sat down with visitors amid racks of merchandise proclaiming, "Marvin Hagler, Middleweight Champion." Well, not anymore. And learning to cope with that realization has been the biggest change of all.

On this crisp October day, Marvin Hagler decided to break a silence that had been deafening. Except for a short time spent with ***Sports Illustrated****, Hagler hadn't spoken at length with the press since he lost his middleweight crown to Sugar Ray Leonard on April 6. Now, he was willing to talk to our Jeff Ryan about both his career and his life, and the future of both. As he explained, he needed to make his feelings known. Speaking his mind was perhaps his own prescribed therapy.*

In the past several months, everyone has spoken about Hagler, making the need to hear him speak seem all the more crucial. Were the rumors true? Had he become inconsolable after the loss? Was he abusing cocaine and alcohol, as published reports had said? Were his differences with his wife of eight years, Bertha, irreconcilable? And—the question tearing at the minds of fight fans—would he fight again?

As we spoke to Hagler, he was still separated from Bertha and living in an apartment in Boston. For him, it was a time of intense reflection, an opportunity to contemplate the crucial decisions facing him. His marriage, his boxing career, his hectic schedule of appearances—he must decide if he still wants any or all to remain a part of his life.

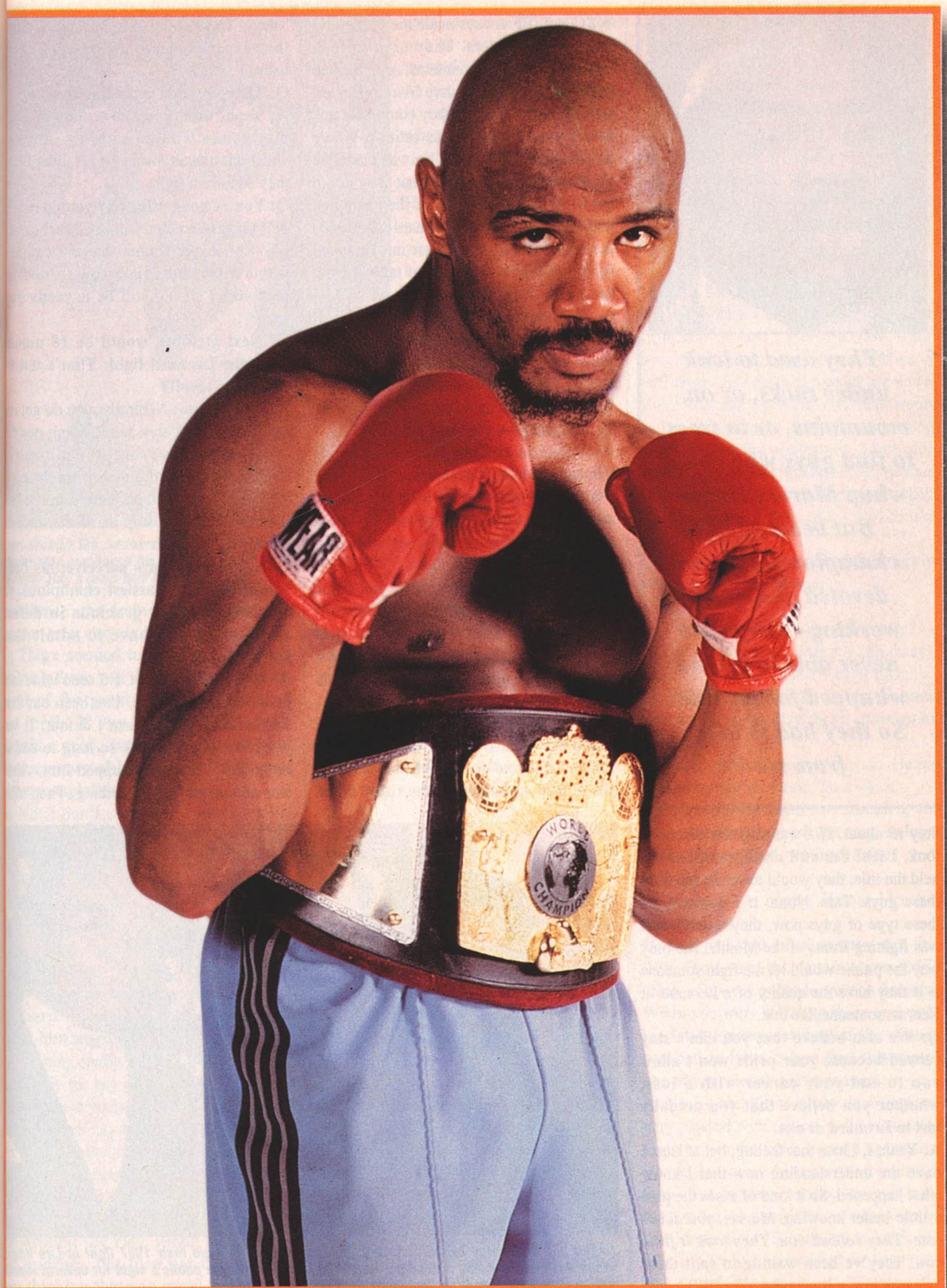
One of the objectives of our chat with Hagler was to provide a glimpse into the personal side of him. For, after all, we know so little about the man who does spend far more time in a three-piece suit than a pair of trunks. We know Hagler The Fighter intimately. But who is Hagler The Man? Maybe not the person we think he is.

Or, as he's discovering, maybe not even the person ***he*** *always thought he was.*

Interview conducted October 1987

Q: Instead of asking you the same tiresome question, "Are you going to fight again?" we'll tell you what we think. And that is you will fight again. After you hear Hearns or Roldan or Frank Tate, or maybe Michael Nunn saying, "I want the old man," it's going to stir the fire inside of you. It will be like when Rocky Balboa got sick and tired of hearing Apollo Creed calling for him and he came back simply to close Apollo's mouth. Your response.

A: Well, you know, I'm gonna sit back and laugh at these guys, because I think it's a big joke. First of all, I knocked out two of the guys that want to fight me—that's Hearns and Roldan—so they can talk all they want. I already know what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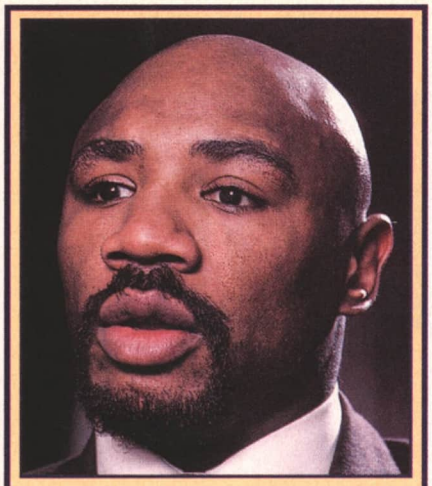


"They used to look under rocks, or on mountains, or in trees to find guys who could whup Marvin Hagler ... But because of the champion I am—so devoted and hard-working—they were never able to get me whupped for my title. So they had to take it from me."

they're about. If I was still the champ—look, I feel I'm still champion—but if I held the title, they would never let me fight these guys. Tate. Nunn. If I was to fight these type of guys now, they would say I was fighting Bums of the Month. The only way the public would let me fight someone is if they have the quality of a Leonard or Hearns, someone like that.

Q: We also believe that you can't stay retired because your pride won't allow you to end your career with a loss, whether you believe that you actually lost to Leonard or not.

A: Yeah, I, I hate that feeling, but at least I have the understanding now that I know what happened. So it kind of eases the pain a little better knowing, *Marvin, you didn't lose. They robbed you. They took it from you.* They've been waiting to split these titles up for a long time. The WBA and WBC and IBF always made me fight number-one contenders. They used to look under rocks, or on mountains, or in trees to find guys who could whup Marvin Hagler. Anybody that said that they could beat me, they'd put up there in the ratings. Where did Mugabi come from? He was made the number-one contender so that they could get to fight me. Because of the champion that I am—so devoted and hard-working—they were never able to get me whupped for my title. So they had to take it from me.

Q: The impression you give is that you'll probably come back, but right now you're just sitting around and waiting for the very best offer. Is that true?

A: Well, I'm sitting around ... and, *uh* ...

Q: Are you going to fight again?

A: I'm not sure. Really. Deep down inside I'm undecided. I'm gonna evaluate the whole situation and see what these turkeys are doing out there. Maybe we might go, maybe we might not. Let's see what happens.

Q: Everyone assumes that if you came back it would only be to face a Leonard or a Hearns. Can we conclude that you're not interested in winning a WBA title from a Sumbu Kalambay? Would that be a waste of your time?

A: No, it's not a waste of time, because I would like to have my title back. But what I think I'd like to do is maybe sit back and see if they can unite all the titles again. Then if I was going to fight again, I'd fight the winner of that to get my unified title back.

Q: That may take quite a long time.

A: Yeah, well, you know, they're gonna play games with me anyway. Anybody will want to wait for me to get older before they sign for a fight.

Q: You're not getting any younger.

A: I understand that. But I still feel in great physical shape. I think that if I can do it within a year from right now ... this time next year I should still be in pretty good shape.

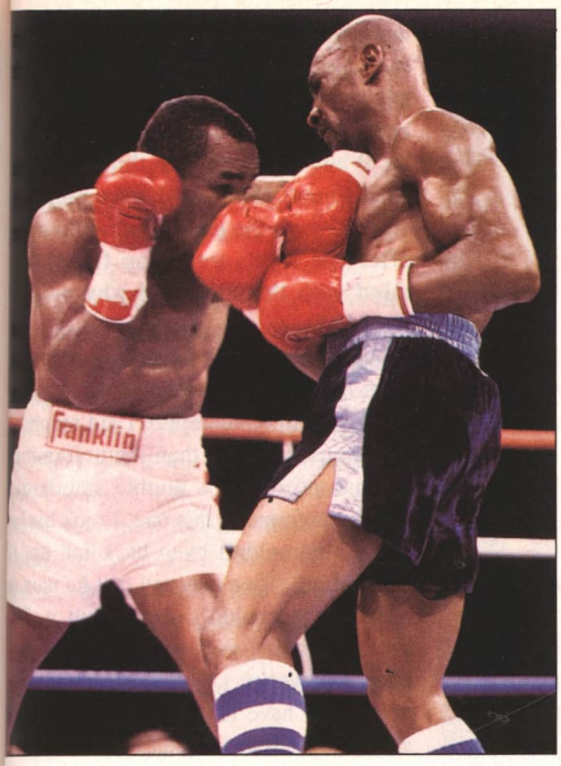
Q: Next October would be 18 months since the Leonard fight. That's not too much of a layoff?

A: I don't know. Naturally, you do get ring rust, but if I can stay active doing my personal appearances and stay in the gym once in a while, the desire might come back. And I don't think there's anything in the world that can stop me if the desire is there.

Q: You were always perceived as being one of boxing's classiest champions, yet you weren't very gracious in defeat. Even you would have to admit that. Do—

A: Well, it wasn't that. I'd seen what happens. I knew the game. I've been out there long enough. That wasn't defeat. It was just robbery. They took so long to add up the cards. I knew I whupped him. And I was all excited and everything. Then all of

Hagler and Sugar Ray Leonard make a joint appearance to hype their 1987 fight in Las Vegas. When this interview was conducted, Hagler had been out of the public's sight for several months before agreeing to speak on the record about his loss to Leonard.



Even though the Leonard-Hagler fight (pictured) was close, Hagler was convinced that he'd won and felt that the decision in Sugar Ray's favor was a rip-off.

a sudden ... the decision. It does put a big drop on your attitude.

Q: There seemed to be a lot more complaining from you than any acknowledgment of the great effort that Leonard put forth. If you never fought again, there's a good chance that a lot of fans' final memory of Marvin Hagler is one of bitter complaining.

A: No. I don't complain. I haven't complained. I just said that it was unfair. If you feel in your heart that you won it, you should be able to stand up and say something. This is why I'm talkin' to you, so that you can let the public know the way I really feel. It's not me complaining, it's the way I feel.

Q: What good do you have to say about Leonard in regard to the fight? What about him surprised you?

A: Nothing really surprised me because I was ready for any game plan that he had. I don't have anything really nice to say right now. I'll just say that the outcome wasn't his fault. It's the judges' fault.

Q: On our scorecard, we thought you lost the fight. You probably lost it in the first four rounds, when you were walking around the ring, lining Leonard up for punches, but then not firing. Were you thinking that you could just step up your attack and knock him out at any time that you wanted?

A: No. I think your judgment is wrong. What I did was what I trained to do: come right at him. I was bobbing and weaving, comin' at him. He was a moving target and you can't swing at just air. If you know anything about boxing, you know that you've got to be able to trap the opponent. You just don't throw a punch for nothing. A professional knows when the shot is there. Why waste punches?

I haven't watched the fight again with you to evaluate what you're saying about the first four rounds, but I know I came out smokin' because he tried to intimidate me. When they started to sing the National Anthem, you saw him walking around, coming over to my side, punching at me behind my back. I went over to his side to show him, "Hey, I got no fear of you, man. Let me tell you something, you can go." And I had him three times. I hate that I didn't put him away. I wanted to put him out. That man was hurt. I know he was hurt, and he might not ever be right again. 'Cause when I finish with you, you're never right again.

Q: Why didn't you knock him out if you had him hurt?

A: I wanted to put him out. There's a lot of times that you can't knock people out. If you go for the knockout, the knockout never comes. You have to give the man credit for surviving. He ran like a rabbit. He was afraid of me. This man didn't come to fight me; he came to survive. But he did what he had to do. All I could ever ask for is that if the fight went the distance, they give me a fair shake. I knew if Leonard stayed on his feet that I was probably gonna lose. In the late rounds, I tried to put him away. I tried to tire him out and get rid of him. But the man was holding, running, trying all his little tricks.

He's always been out there in the limelight. The pretty-boy. The Olympic champion. All that stuff must have influenced the judges. But a fighter knows when he's in there with another good fighter. And Leonard has to give me credit because he knows he was in there with a champion.

Q: One of your problems was that you showed Leonard too much respect. Why didn't you charge right out and try to bury him under a barrage of punches, as you did Hearns?

A: 'Cause Leonard trained for that type of fight. He watched all my films and he knew that I might fight that way. Well, I never like to fight the same way twice. It's funny, a lot of people were saying that I was done. That I didn't even have another fight left in me. I was old. *(Becoming testy)* Well, how come *he* didn't knock *me* out? How come *he* didn't knock *me* down? Huh? Why don't you turn this thing around and ask him why he didn't do those things when he had the opportunity? I'm older and he's much younger and much quicker. How come he didn't knock me out? Okay? That's the way I feel. And I said to him, "You got nuthin'!"

Q: If you could do all of this again, which just might happen ...

A: *(Laughs)*

Q: ... what would you do differently?

A: I'll put him away. Just put him away. I won't tell you how. I don't know how.

Q: What happens if he fights the same way he did in the first fight, utilizing his movement?

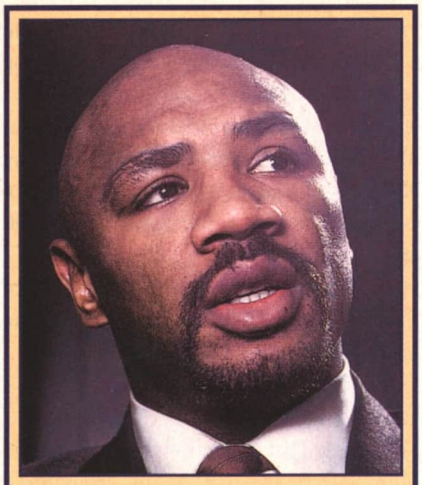
A: I don't think he can do it again. He just peaked for that one time. That was it.

Q: After the final bell had sounded, you were strutting around the ring, doing a little dance that we had never seen before.

A: Yeah. I was happy. 'Cause I knew I won the fight.

Q: You just said a few minutes ago that if the fight went the distance, you didn't think you were going to get the decision. When you were standing there and waiting for the announcement of the winner, you had to have known that this wasn't one of your better performances.

A: No. To me, it was one of the best. I was very pleased with myself. I did what I had to do to win the fight. I stayed aggressive, stayed on top of him, threw punches. I threw just as many punches or even more than he did. (A computerized tally revealed that Hagler fired 792 punches to Leonard's 629. But Leonard connected on 49 percent of his shots, Hagler on just 37 percent.) I



"You have to give the man [Leonard] credit for surviving. He ran like a rabbit. He was afraid of me. This man didn't come to fight; he came to survive."

realized, like you said, that I wasn't throwing that many punches in the beginning. That's because he was moving a lot. But once he started slowing down, I was able to make contact with his body and I started landing more. Right now in my heart, today, while I'm sitting here telling you, I still feel I beat him. And he knows it.

Q: There has been a great deal of confusion, accusations, and denials about what the two of you actually said to each other regarding the outcome of the fight. What exactly did Leonard say to you?

A: Leonard said, "You beat me, babe." He knows it. Because I put the pressure on him and he kept looking over for help. He was lookin' for [trainer Angelo] Dundee to pull him out. But Dundee don't give no mercy to none of his fighters. So Leonard was in trouble. The bell saved him a couple times. I give the man credit for standing up and being able to keep moving. I thought I would be able to stop his lateral movement, corner him, then go to work on him. But the man was smart. He tied me up when I cornered him. He's very cagey. I realize that now.

Q: Have you spoken with Leonard since that night?

A: No, I haven't.

Q: Are you two still friends?

A: We never were friends. That was the press talk. That talk was Leonard trying to lighten things up so I didn't hurt him. We didn't have dinner all the time like people said. I came down to his restaurant and supported him after he retired from boxing. He promised to come here when I opened my store. He never came. But that's out of the question now. I don't need him in my store. He said to me, "If you come down here, then I'll return the favor and come up to see your store." See, I should have let him come here first. Being the champion I am, and the man I am, I felt as though he had that same type of class. But I find out that the man's got *no* class.

Q: You dropped completely out of sight immediately following the loss. Obviously, you needed some time to gather your thoughts. It was widely reported that you had lapsed into a severe state of depression during that time and that you had gone into hiding.

A: Why do people say that? After every fight I vanish, even when I win. The thing with me is that I'm not like a Leonard or a Muhammad Ali. I don't really try to feed off the media. What I like to do is be myself and have my own personal life. I like to be able to get back into Marvin Hagler as the father and the person and stuff like that. I forget about the boxing game for a while. Your mind needs as much rest as your body. If you're constantly going and meeting with the press and talking about fighting, the next thing you know, you're right back into a fight again.

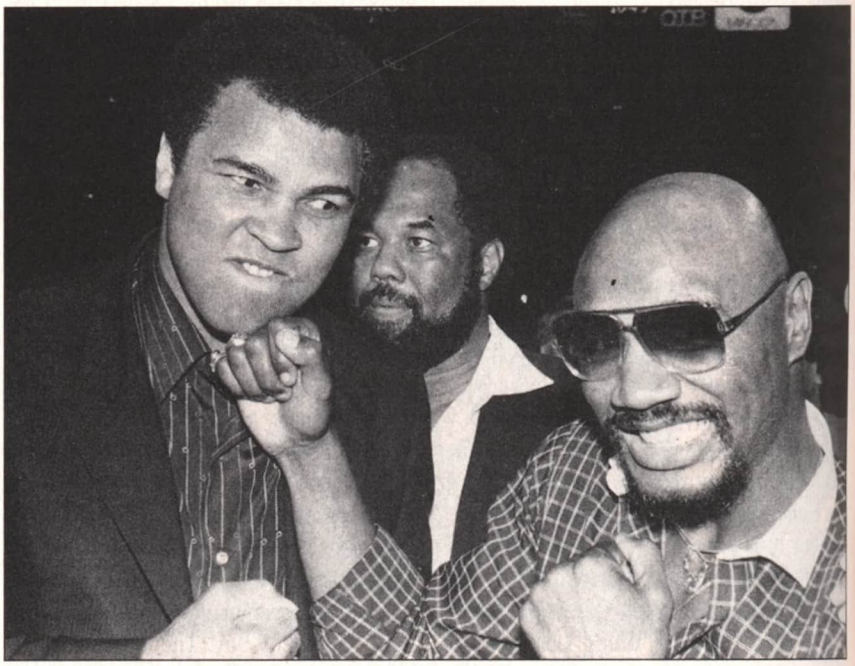
Q: What does a fighter think of during such times? When you were alone driving through the country about a month after the fight, were you filling your mind with the whys and why nots and what ifs?

A: In the beginning, I couldn't understand what happened. I remembered too when I fought [Vito] Antuofermo. I did much better against Leonard than Antuofermo did against me. There's double standards. I was Antuofermo in this one. I took his best shots. He couldn't even back me up. He had nothing. Then they say that he won the fight. I just couldn't understand it. That bothered me. I got over that feeling in about two weeks.

I didn't have any help. I got over it by myself. I reminded myself that I have other things that I can venture into, like the movies, commercials, TV commentary. I found out that I shouldn't let a boxing problem bother me. I told myself, "Marvin, you gotta let that stuff go by. At least you made the money. You can always go to the bank." That took some of the pain off of it.

Q: Eighteen million dollars should take a lot of pain off of it.

A: *(Laughs)* And it did. It wasn't a really deep depression. I had been in that situa-



Hagler clowns around with Muhammad Ali in 1983. Hagler claimed that unlike Ali and Leonard, he doesn't seek the spotlight away from the ring and doesn't like spending too much time with the media.

on before, down in the Philadelphia ights. (Hagler dropped decisions to Bobby Watts and Willie Monroe in two "Philly Wars" in 1976.) I thought I won down ere, too. It's been such a long time since lost that people felt I must have gone into deep depression. That wasn't true. I don't ke this losing feeling, but I can adapt.

: Did part of the sadness you felt in the eeks after the fight stem from the fact hat you are realizing that your career is oming to a close?

: Well, yeah. I put everything into that ght because if it was going to be my last ght, I wanted it to be my best fight. I orked very hard for that fight. I started aining earlier than I normally do. I spent ree months in training and I really pun- hed my body. I felt in tremendous shape. xcellent shape.

: If you had knocked him out, would ou have retired?

: If I had knocked him out, there ouldn't have been as much excitement bout the fight as there is right now. It ould have died right off because every- ne expected that was what was gonna appen. But yes, I think I would have tired. That's what I had hoped to do.

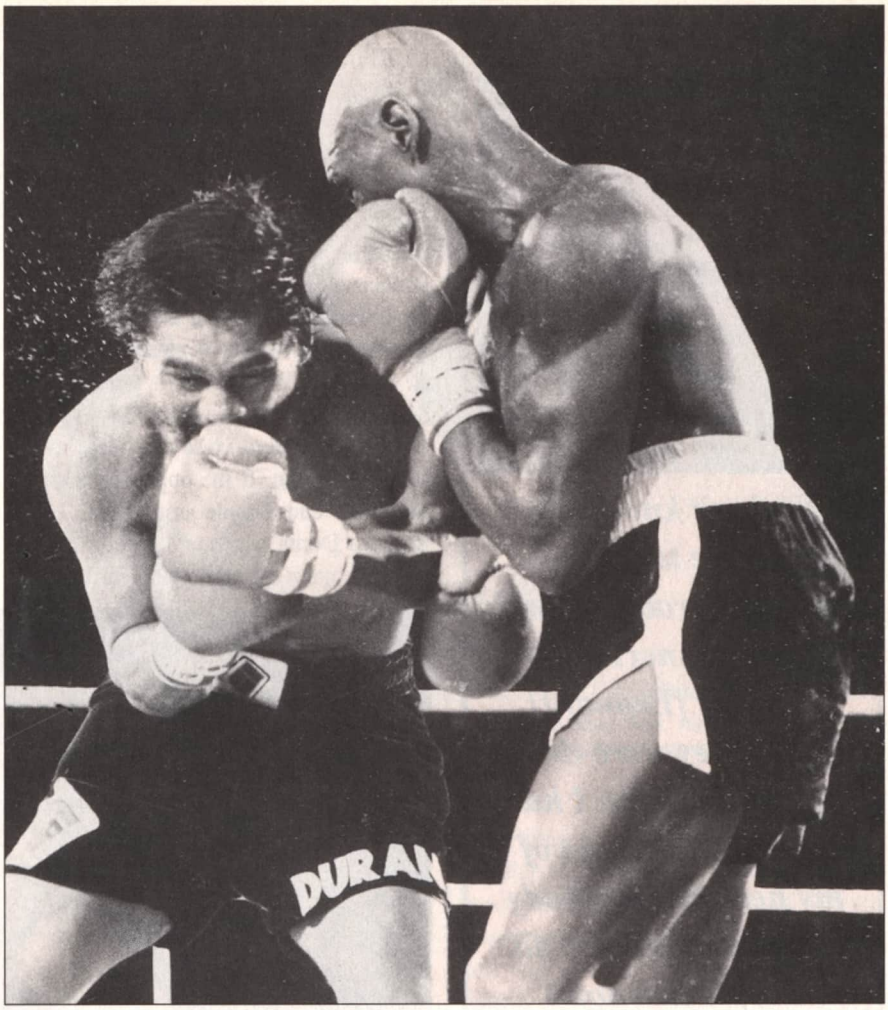
: Were you surprised that Kevin loward was able to floor Leonard but ou couldn't?

: He underestimated Kevin Howard, I hink. I knew he wouldn't do that with e because he didn't want any more mbarrassment. It's like that with any ighter. When I got through with Roberto Duran, I didn't want any more of that ype of embarrassment. Duran was only ne point away from beating me. I knew hat I had to do after that—knock people ut—and I did that against Hearns and Mugabi. After the Mugabi fight, every- ody said, "He's getting old." Everybody *ants* me to get old. Everybody *wants* me get beat. Everybody wants to see me in state of depression right now. They ant to put me on drugs, down me. When ou win, nobody says nuthin.' But when omething goes wrong, everything comes ut.

: You did quite a bit of partying this ummer. Was that the normal American ale breaking loose from the body of a ighter who had always trained like a Spartan?

: There we go again. A lot of people are saying that, too. But I had personal problems and that was the reason I was going out. I had family problems. It wasn't because of the fight. A lot of people just related that behavior to the fight because it came so soon after it. But I'll tell you, if you want to know the truth, my deepest feelings were that I was very proud of myself. I was proud of being in the biggest fight ever, of making more money for a fight than was ever made, of being in a fight that had more viewers than any other. All these things are good.

I was proud to know that if I retired I could still talk and I didn't have cauliflower ears or a busted up nose, which I imagined it would be when I retired. I came out with my faculties, thank God. That made me want to celebrate. I don't know why people take my personal problems and try to connect them with the fight. They were there *before* the fight. I had to block them out of my head, just like anybody else would have to do. People don't understand that I hide a lot of things.



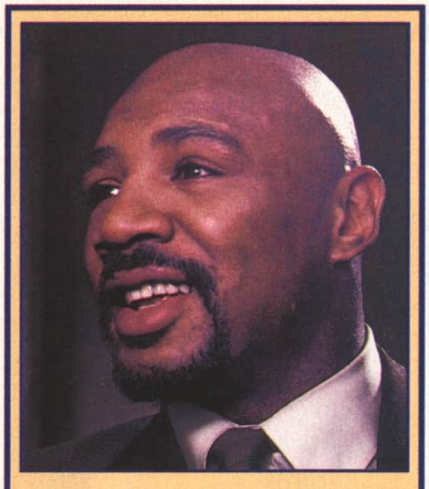
Hagler, pictured clipping Roberto Duran en route to a 15-round decision victory in November '83, was stung by criticism that he failed to knock out Duran. He bounced back with kayos of Thomas Hearns and John Mugabi, but couldn't stop Sugar Ray.

Q: A story that appeared in the September 28 issue of *Sports Illustrated* was somewhat vague in providing your response to the rumors of drug use that have followed you in the last six months. You told them that you have never abused cocaine. Have you, in fact, ever used it?

A: No. Never.

Q: You've never used cocaine?

A: No, no, no, no. But I've been around it. You know what I mean. With other friends. You grew up and you know it's everywhere. When you're an athlete or a movie star, people are always offering it to you. Once you become famous, you see it like anything. Before that, with kids in the '50s, it was alcohol. They used to drink. If it's not that, people are going to push the women on you. So how do you survive in this world of things that can destroy you? You have to be smart enough.



"I don't know why people take my personal problems and try to connect them with the [Leonard] fight. They were there before the fight. I had to block them out of my head like anybody else would have to do. People just don't understand that I hide a lot of things."

Q: The partying you speak of involved drinking, then, not drugs.

A: Yes. Mostly after every fight I would have champagne. It's just that people saw me out more after this fight because of my family problems. Maybe a lot of people who lost a lot of money on me tried to start rumors. I don't know. After I fought for 17 years—if I'm not gonna fight again—why can't I go out and enjoy myself now that I'm all done? Why, when I sacrificed for all these years can't I one day sit down like a normal person, joke with you, and have drinks? That's the day I've been waiting for. Now it comes, and people say, "Oh, no, no. You still can't drink."

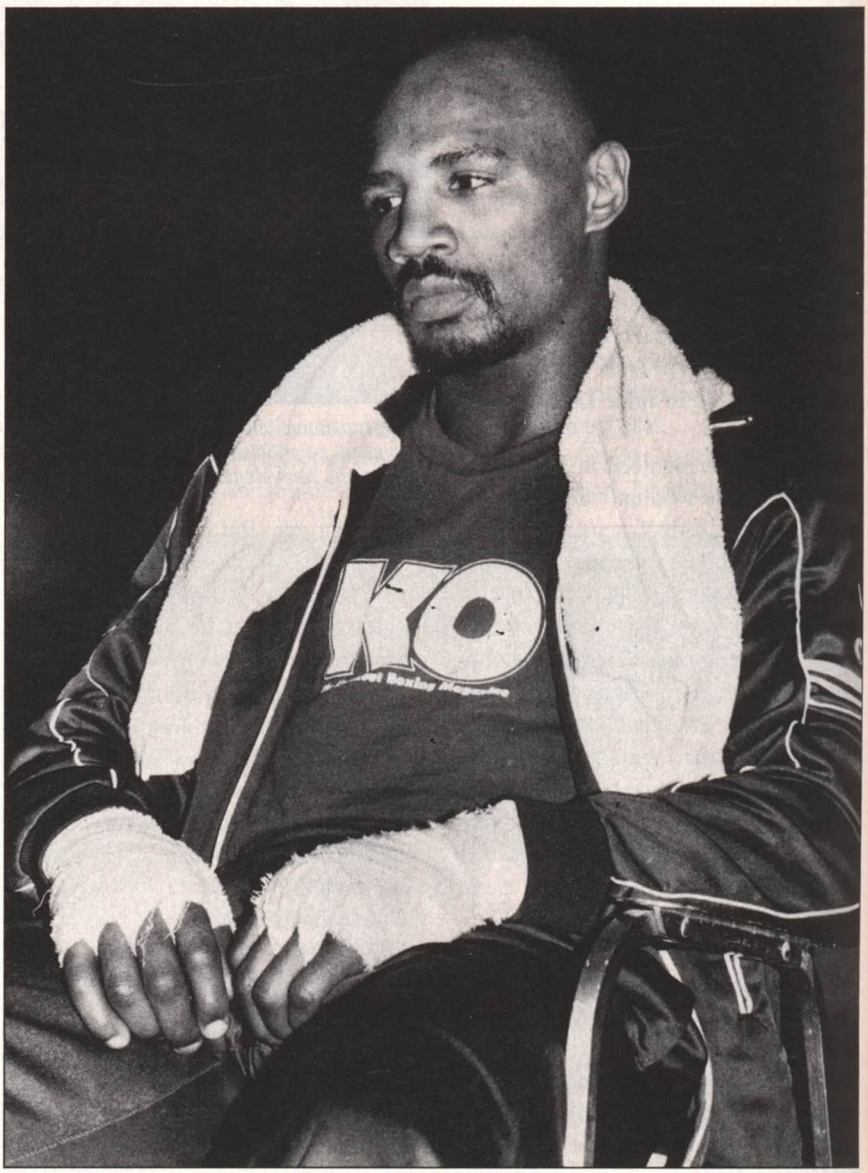
I had to overlook that and not let that attitude bother me. Right now, that's what I'm doing now. I'm back to work in the store. I'm feeling very good about myself. I'm trying to keep my private life very private if I can. It's not easy, because people are still asking me about things every time I step out the door. But at least everyone has been very positive. I haven't found a person yet who said I didn't win. Besides you *(laughs)*. That's why you're writing. That's why you're on that side. You gotta be on the inside, then you'll know the difference.

Q: I wouldn't want to be on your side. Except when the check clears.

A*: (Laughs)* When I don't look good or don't knock them out, everybody is gonna criticize me. Everybody expects me to knock them out. If the opponent is standing at the end, people assume that I lost. Roberto Duran was standing and he was within a point on one of the cards. Same thing with Leonard. I'm not allowed to keep 'em on their feet.

Q: Let's go back to the topic of drugs for a moment. What is your stand regarding drugs? Do you have a message for the kids who look up to you?

A: I believe in education and in giving your body and mind a chance to grow. Try to find out what your ability really is. Education is the most important thing that I believe in. Be involved in sports, whether it's boxing, football, basketball, baseball. Kids need to learn sportsmanship and good conduct. They need people teaching them to be better people when they grow up. It keeps them away from the drugs and alcohol and gets them off the street and away from the crime.



On a bummer: Hagler was depressed after the controversial loss to Leonard, and there were rumors that he was using cocaine. Hagler denied using cocaine or any other drugs, but said he usually drank champagne to celebrate after a victory.

: You said that your future may lie in ting. What would the ideal Marvin agler movie role be? Would you be a ugh guy? A sensitive romantic type?

: Most likely it would be a tough guy. I nt to get involved with kids. I want the ds to see me in a role that's fun for them. role where I'm still an idol. Like a huck Norris role. I wouldn't want to play punch-drunk fighter or a Rocky type, ing *uh, duh, duh, duh.* I want an intelli- nt role that has messages to get across to e kids. I want roles that every race can nderstand.

: No love story for you?

: *(Snickering)* No ... I don't think so. lus, my wife won't allow me to do that nyway.

: How did you get interested in acting?

: I don't know. I think it all happened ecause of my boxing. The litfle commer- ials and the interviews made me a little ore comfortable speaking and acting. So y manager, Pat [Petronelli], started say- g, "Marvin, you're getting good at this." o I started paying more attention to it. I tarted doing things like *Punky Brewster* nd a Bob Hope special. Everything started olling together. I still want to do more of hose. I like variety shows, comedy shows. nything that means having fun.

: To say that you are a private person ould be a tremendous understatement. rior to the fight with Mugabi, your romoter, Bob Arum, said that Hagler ad always sought the attention and ublicity that he felt he was unjustly enied. Then when he started to get it fter he beat Thomas Heams, he decided hat maybe he really didn't want the ttention because so many demands ame along with them. Is that true?

: I think every fighter is kinda scared. I hink there are even actors who are scared f the press, scared of becoming too amous. There's too much pressure on you. he people are too demanding. They take o much of your time away from you. If ou want to do anything else, you can't. nd you need time for yourself as well as r your family and friends. *You* are impor- nt, too. If you're constantly working and onstantly in people's faces ... I hate being people's faces all the time. I like to be way from them and sometimes I like to be ft alone. Unfortunately, things don't ork like that.

Hagler takes one on the chin from* Punky Brewster *star Soleil Moon Frye. Hagler, who wanted to become an actor after retiring from the ring, made a guest appearance on the popular TV show in 1985.

It's not that I don't like the media, but I'm not the type of person that sucks up the media. When the attention finally came, I said, "Where were you guys when I needed you? Now they wonder where I'm at." They're looking for me. It's something how that changes around.

Q: The readers know so little about your private life, so maybe you can provide a little insight into your day-to-day existence. What is an ideal way for you to spend your time alone?

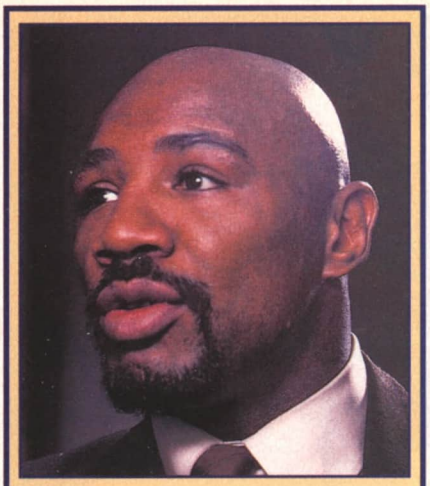
A: I like to listen to music, any kind of music. I like jazz, rock and roll. I like Whitney Houston. Oh yeah, she's a beautiful girl. Diana Ross. Marvin Gaye. I like all those Motown songs. Smokey Robinson. Anita Baker. I even like to go back to the early James Brown. Then go back even further than that to when I was growing up in my teenage years. I like hearing some of the old love songs and remembering some of the old parties I used to go to when I was a kid. Cuttin' the lights out, then your mother comes in yellin' at you, and everybody runs away. Those are good times I like to remember. I like the music that takes me back.

I like to take nice long drives. I'll take a drive down The Cape or up to New Hampshire, where I have a home. It's pretty good. It gives me a chance to get my thoughts together and know what I want in life. That's pretty tough, trying to put everything together and plan your life. I wonder to myself what's gonna happen next. What's gonna happen if Marvin Hagler never gets a chance to enjoy himself and then all of a sudden there's a tragedy and I never got a chance to do anything? I have to start taking it day-by-day and start saying, "Marvin, spend a little bit of the money that you made. You never had a chance to do that before. Take trips." I like that. I took a nice vacation. I went to St. Maarten, St. Thomas, Puerto Rico. I met a bunch of different people. All great people. But it wasn't really much of a private vacation. Everywhere I went there was talk about my family life and the fight. Someone was always in my face. There was always a conversation going. If I sit down for a minute, someone notices me and they come over and talk to me.

My life is only private if I'm inside my car or inside my house. That's when I regroup. Only after my time alone am I comfortable going back to work, like I'm doing now. I've gotten more into myself now. I know what I'm about. I like myself. I know I'm not a bad person.

Q: You just said that you like to be alone where you can decide what to do with your life. What do you want to do? Where do you want life to take you?

A: Right now, I want to become a success-



"Whether I end it or not, I've had a very good career. I can say one thing: If I never fight again, at least I fought them all, and I feel very good about that. I can't find any real disappointments in my career."

ful businessman. I'm down at my store. I want to be here as much as I can. I want to cater to the community. I want to help them in any kind of way I can. If I retire, it would be nice to still be visible for the people.

I want to get involved in movies to keep my face out there. But I want just a little bit of it, not a lot of it. I'd just like to see how I'd do. If I became serious about it, then I'd put the same devotion and sacrifice into acting that I did in boxing. I'd go to school for acting and speech. But I still say to myself, "Marvin, are you gonna be serious about this?" That's what I still don't know quite yet. If I get the opportunity and get more work, maybe I'll become a lot more serious.

Q: Tell us some things that make Marvin Hagler happy, make him smile, and some things that make him frown.

A: What makes me happy ... right now, it's kind of tough for me right now. I think what makes me happy is being my own man. Being able to do what I want to do, say what I want to say, go where I want to go. What makes me frown is when people don't leave me alone sometimes. When they don't understand me. Then the frown comes out, the fighter starts to come out. Then you better move away from me. Mr. Nice Guy has quit.

Q: We've been told that you prefer not to discuss the situation between you and your wife, Bertha. To the public, the problems you have had seemed like a cliche: First the fighter loses, then he takes out his frustrations on his family, going crazy at home and turning everything into a scene from *Raging Bull*.

A: No way. No. Listen, I don't want to talk about that personal life, but I think that money and prestige kind of messed us up a little bit. And people getting involved in trying to know our personal life added to it. If they just left us alone and let us handle our own problem, I think things probably would have worked out. As it started getting blown up by the press, things got worse at home. Money was part of the situation, though. People seem to change when a lot of money comes around. I had been keeping myself very low, and the money didn't excite me at all. I wanted to win the fight, and that was more important to me than the money.

Q: Did Bertha push you into the fight for the money?

A: No, she didn't push me. That was my own idea.

Q: We're just confused as to how money caused problems in the marriage.

A: We'll, for anybody who's got a lot of money, it creates a lot of problems. I can't tell you right now specifically how it goes, but it does create a lot of problems.

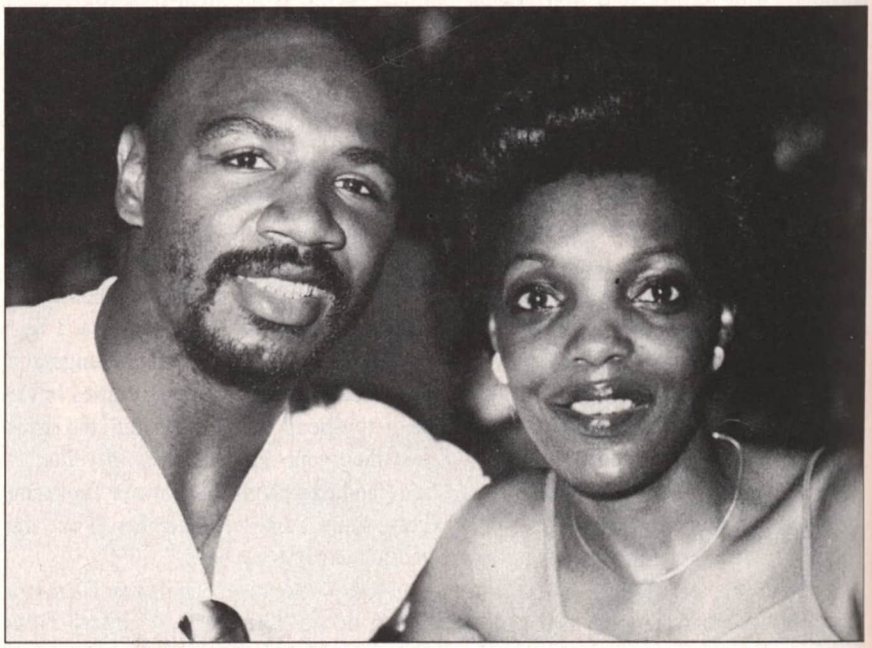
Q: It had been said that a lot of the difficulties in the marriage evolved from the fact that wherever you went, there were always various women vying for your affection. Is that true?

A: No. I always carried my wife anywhere I went. We traveled together all the time. She's got a good right hand, too. They know better. I never had a problem with women, because I always sacrificed myself for the fight game. I knew that playing around was bad, even between fights. That was never really a big problem there. Are you still trying to find out what the problem is in our marriage? *(laughs)*.

Q: Taking a shot at it.

A: I think it's just the same problems that any other husband and wife have: You fight and argue over little things and they have a way of turning into big things. It's "Who's going to watch the kids tonight?" or "I'm going out," or "No. You stay home." We might get back together soon. Who knows. If people leave us alone ... Let time work things out ... what we need is space. Then we'll see what happens.

Q: What are some of the major social issues that concern you?



Hagler and his wife, Bertha, were having well-publicized marital difficulties in the aftermath of his loss to Leonard. Hagler claimed they were just the same sort of problems that all husbands and wives experience, but was reluctant to go into much more detail than that.

Marvelous Marvin Haberdasher: Hagler shows off some of the items in the sporting goods store he opened in Hanover, Massachusetts.

A: AIDS. AIDS and nuclear war are the big two. I always tease and say I'm gonna buy a rocket. If they launch a missile, I'm gonna push a button and I'm takin' off. If my family ain't ready, I'm gonna be gone. I'll be up there and it ain't my fault if they miss it.

Q: After the long silence, why did you agree to do this interview?

A: Because I need to let people know that I am coming back out. Maybe not to fight … or maybe I am. I know that the two of us have been trying to get together for a long time, and I always had a busy schedule. Now I have the time, so I thought it would be nice to have you guys come down and see what I'm all about. I wanted you to be able to understand me outside of the boxing.

Q: How do you want to be remembered by the historians?

A: I hope they remember me somewhere in the sense of my idol, Floyd Patterson. Floyd is a well-respected person around the community and the boxing world. I want to be remembered as someone who has given a lot to the boxing world. Someone who made the right decision and was smart enough to get out of the boxing game before he got hurt. Someone who didn't wind up like Muhammad Ali. That's why I'm just sitting back watchin' and waitin' to see what I'm gonna do.

I gotta tell you something. Whether I end it or not, I've had a very good career. I can say one thing: If I never fight again, at least I fought them all, and I feel very good about that. I can't find any real disappointments in my career. Some things are just meant to be. But all that happened to me in boxing is only making me stronger. I'm becoming strong again.

Q: What stirs your passions?

A: Fighting.

Q: Everybody knows that. Besides that.

A: No, that's my life. That's my love. I walk it, talk it, sleep it, act it. Just try not to look it. That's my passion. That and trying to be happy … that's tough. All the money in the world … if you're not happy, it doesn't mean anything.

Q: Are you happy at this moment?

A: At this moment … I'm putting everything together. I'm getting it together. I'm getting out, I'm working again, I'm down at the store. I'm getting to love myself as Marvin Hagler the man, not the boxer. I'm trying to not show people the fighter image. I want them to see the other side of Marvin also. I'm a person. I have other desires instead of just boxing. I just want to go on with my life.

HAGLER UPDATE

Marvelous Marvin never did fight again, finishing his career with a 62-3-2 (52) professional record. His marriage to Bertha continued to deteriorate, and they were divorced in 1990. By then Hagler had already moved to Milan, Italy, where he took up acting and learned to speak passable Italian. His first role was in an action movie called *Indio*, that co-starred Brian Dennehy and Francesco Quinn. Hagler was elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1993 and has returned frequently to Canastota, New York, in subsequent years, basking in the adoration of the fans who flock there for induction weekend. He still has difficulty saying anything nice about Ray Leonard.

MIKE TYSON

"My Life Is Useless"

THE INDIANA YOUTH Center is located just off Route 40 in the town of Plainfield, about 25 miles outside of downtown Indianapolis. There's a corn field on the other side of the road, and except for the barbed wire-topped fence and guard towers, it looks more like a rural high school than a penitentiary. The IYC also happens to be the residence of America's most famous prison inmate this side of O.J. Simpson.

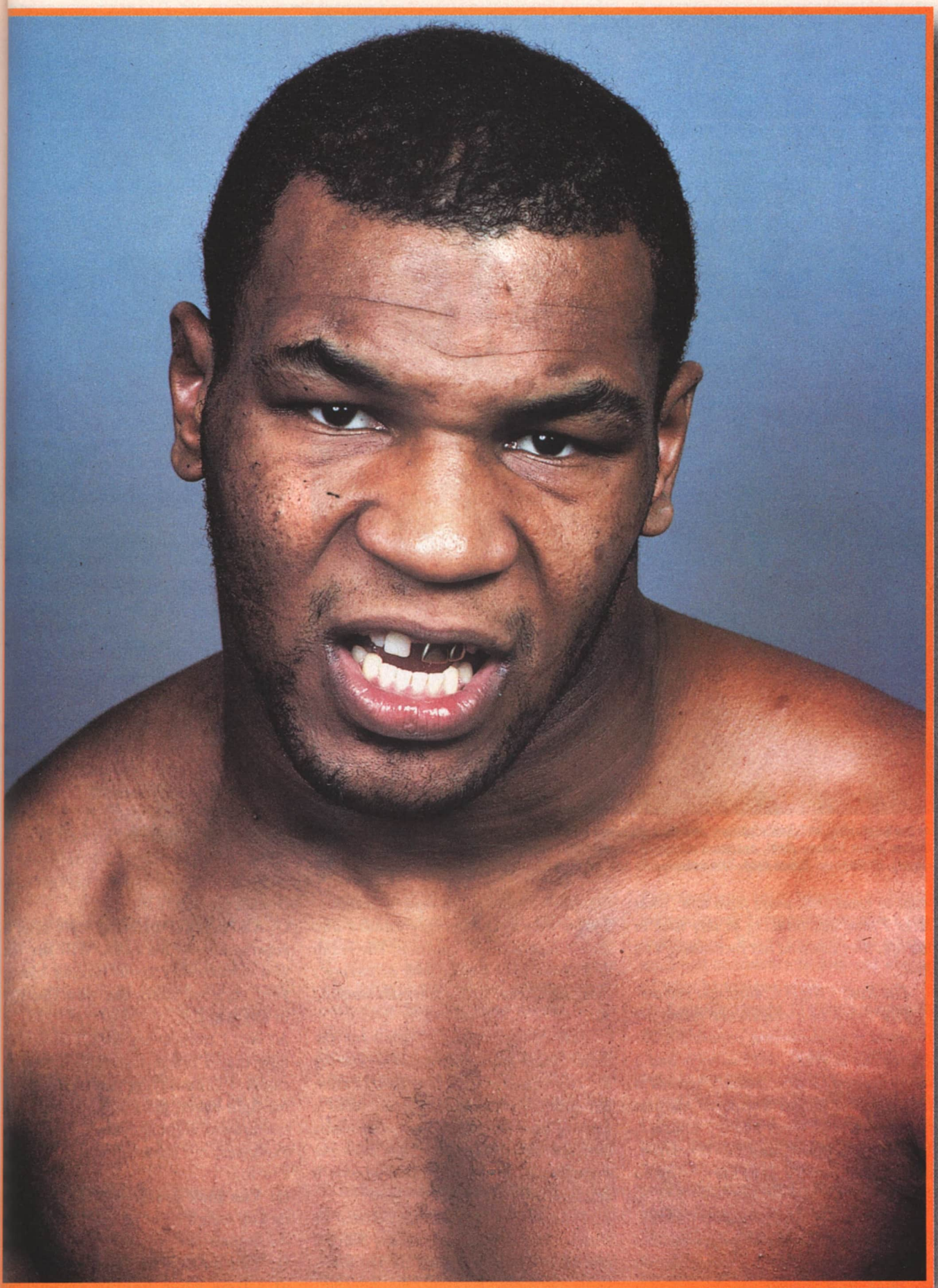
Michael Gerald Tyson, former heavyweight champion of the world and self-proclaimed "Baddest Man On The Planet," has been incarcerated here since March 1993, when judge Patricia Gifford sentenced him to six years for the 1991 rape of an 18-year-old beauty pageant contestant. Under Indiana law, Tyson must serve half his time before becoming eligible for parole. Despite a series of appeals on his behalf by high-powered attorney Alan Dershowitz and rumors of impending deals to spring him, inmate number 922335 remains behind bars. Excluding any unforeseen occurrences, his parole date is May 9, 1995.

Although he was no longer champion at the time of his conviction, Tyson, 41-1 (36), was still widely regarded the best heavyweight in the world. As far as the public was concerned, his 10th-round knockout loss to Buster Douglas in February 1990 was an aberration, more the result of Tyson's wavering commitment than a genuine erosion of skills. To millions of Tyson devotees around the world, it was just a matter of time before he regained the title he'd squandered. A scheduled bout with then-champion Evander Holyfield was scrapped when Tyson, awaiting trial, suffered a rib injury. It's a foregone conclusion, however, that upon his release, "Iron Mike" will have absolutely no problem obtaining a fight (fights) with any and all claimants to the throne.

The public's appetite for Tyson has increased, not diminished, since he's been locked up. Even though he hasn't fought since June 28, 1992, when he won a unanimous 12-round decision over Razor Ruddock, Tyson is still the most famous boxer in the world, with the potential to earn untold millions of dollars.

Yet despite his notoriety, and despite the fact both his ring career and personal life have been scrutinized ad nauseam, Tyson remains an enigma. Who is the real Mike Tyson? Is he a barbaric street thug who temporarily managed to channel his inner rage and anti-social attitude into a sensational boxing career? Or is he a lost soul, still searching for the love and nurturing he was deprived of as a child growing up on the mean streets of Brooklyn?

Since he's been incarcerated, not much light has been shed on the inner workings of Tyson. The handful of interviews he's granted haven't revealed anything new, and when THE RING received permission to visit him in late-August, it was with the understanding that it would be a no-holds-barred session. As Tyson put it, "When people



At the beginning of Tyson's career, and through some of his championship run, his team included trainer Kevin Rooney (left), assistant manager Steve Lott (kneeling), and cornerman Matt Baranski (right). Of Rooney, Tyson said, "He believed he had more power than he actually did."

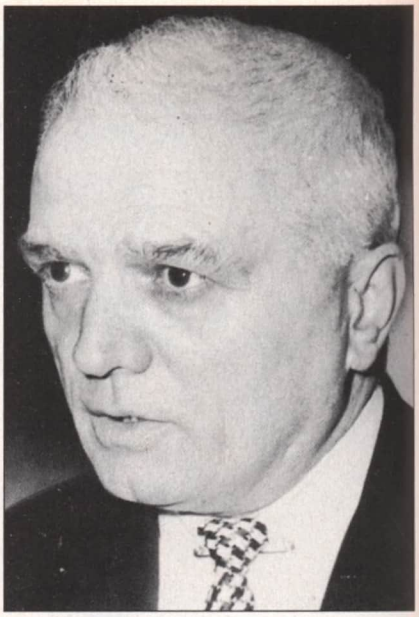
want to know, 100 years from now, what Mike Tyson was thinking at this time in his life, they can find out by reading THE RING."

THE RING's Nigel Collins met privately with Tyson in a conference room, far removed from the prison population. No guards, no lawyers, just two guys and a tape recorder. Tyson initially seemed a little shy and almost whispered his first few answers. It wasn't long, however, before he relaxed, and conversation, and occasionally laughter, flowed freely.

Tyson maintained eye contact throughout the entire 90-minute interview and sometimes tapped his interrogator on the thigh, as if to make sure he was paying close attention. No topic was taboo; Tyson was unremittingly candid and didn't duck a single question. The result is a shockingly honest look at boxing's most significant figure since Muhammad Ali.

Jail changes people, some for the better, many more for the worse. During his conversation with THE RING, Tyson, 28, gave the impression of a man who is looking past the chaos and controversy that has surrounded him, has seen the brutal truth, and is ready to deal with it head-on.

Though Tyson frequently insisted he trusts no one, he paused before leaving the interview room, hand on the doorknob, and looked back over his shoulder.



When trainer/mentor Cus D'Amado died during the early part of Tyson's pro career, it left a void that has never been filled. Tyson called D'Amado an "incredible teacher, an incredible man."

"Write a good story," he said. "I trusted you."

What better way to honor that request than to let Tyson's own words speak for him.

Interview conducted August 1994

Q: Like Muhammad Ali, your boxing career has been suspended for approximately three years during your prime. Do you see any parallels between Ali and yourself?

A: There was only one Ali. There is no parallel. Ali committed himself to something for a reason, and I did mine by making bad choices, not being careful enough protecting myself.

Q: Ali fought a different style after he returned from his exile. Will the time you spent away from boxing change your style or affect the way you fight in any way?

A: No. I train every day. I feel better now than I did at any time during my career. I'm not saying that's gonna make me fight better, but I believe it should. I run around eight miles a day. I do my exercises, my shadowboxing, all that I can do.

Q: You look pretty light. How much do you weigh right now?

A: Around 214 pounds.

Q: You unified the heavyweight title at a time when boxing desperately

King and Tyson look like the best of buddies in this pre-prison shot taken at a press conference in Atlantic City. The controversial promoter took over Tyson's career shortly after the 1988 fight with Michael Spinks that made Tyson the "linear" champion.

needed an undisputed champion. Now the title is split again. How much damage do you feel splintered titles and the proliferation of divisions has done to the sport?

A: I believe we have too many weight divisions now, too many titles. That's because boxing has become big business, and that doesn't allow people to become the best possible fighters they can. You no longer have to work as hard as you used to to become champion. I don't like all the weight divisions. You don't even know who the champion is. At one particular time, you didn't even have to be a fight fan to know who the champions were, because there were only seven of them. Now, you've got 16, 20 of 'em. It's incredible.

Q: If I could wave a magic wand and make you czar of boxing, what would be the one change you would make to improve the sport?

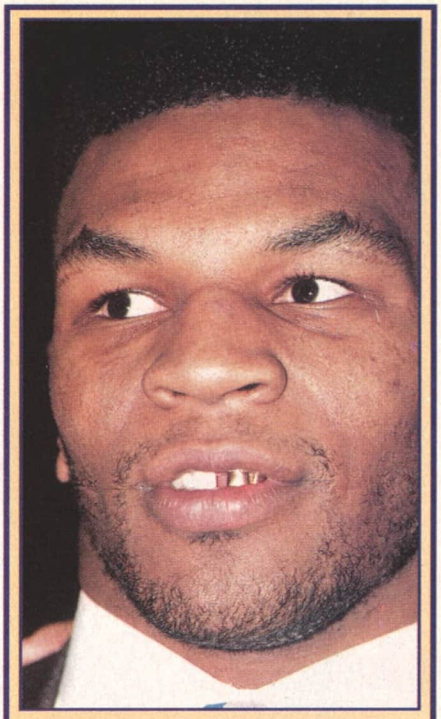
A: Boxers would have pensions—a percentage of their money would go for pensions. Boxing is the only sport where anybody can get involved and make money. A fighter, in general, has no other method of making money except fighting. It can take a guy of low circumstances and put him in the high ranks. But on the other hand, if a guy abuses his skills and neglects them, he can lose his title.

Q: When you start fighting again, would you be willing to give up a percentage of your purse toward a pension fund?

A: Only if we can organize. Fighters are not educated, academically. We come from a great fraternity of individuals, the Louises, the Nelsons, the Dempseys, the Jeffries. This is a great fraternity of men, and we continue to be decimated. As time goes by, boxing becomes more and more in the doldrums. We have to find something to do because we're going to become extinct. It won't be the American Medical Association—we're doing it to ourselves. People are too greedy and they destroy themselves. We have greedy bastards here, man, some rotten sons of bitches.

Q: There have been certain people who have played an important part in both your life and your career. Let's play a variation on the word association game: I'll give you a name and you respond with the first thing that pops into your head. Here goes. Cus D'Amato.

A: An incredible teacher, an incredible man. I believe Mike Tyson and Cus D'Amato had great chemistry. That's the reason Mike Tyson was the fighter he was. He had great chemistry with his trainer, more so than Cus' other fighters that became successful, like Floyd Patterson and Jose Torres. I had more malice in my temperament, and I took orders well. When Cus told me what to do, I had confidence in him and executed what he told me to do.



"Don King sometimes gets caught up in being so suspicious of everybody. I think that sometimes he even distrusts his friends. I think that that's just the life he leads. I don't think he trusts me totally."

Q: Camille Ewald (Tyson's surrogate mother).

A: A loving lady. A lot brighter than people give her credit for. Everybody was always trying to manipulate her, especially the press. She just has a good heart, and when somebody comes to the door and wants to do a story, she's not rude, she doesn't fight back. That's because she's used to having Cus there to fight for her. She's very kind, and people try to take advantage of her because she's a very old lady.

During his interview with THE RING, Tyson described himself as "arrogant" during his boxing career. This photo, taken in December 1985, and before "Iron Mike" had completed his first year as a pro, serves as evidence.

Q: Jim Jacobs.

A: A very different individual, very mysterious. You never knew anything about him. He lived his whole life a secret. No one knew his situation. He always played the role and never got caught up in scandal, because if there's a scandal, you have to be investigated. He never allowed himself to be in that position. No one ever knew him.

Q: Did you know him?

A: No, I never knew him.

Q: Bill Cayton.

A: Bill Cayton is crude and sophisticated at the same time. His main objective is Bill Cayton. I don't take it personally, like I once did when my feelings were hurt. But I put myself in that position by trusting him.

Q: Kevin Rooney.

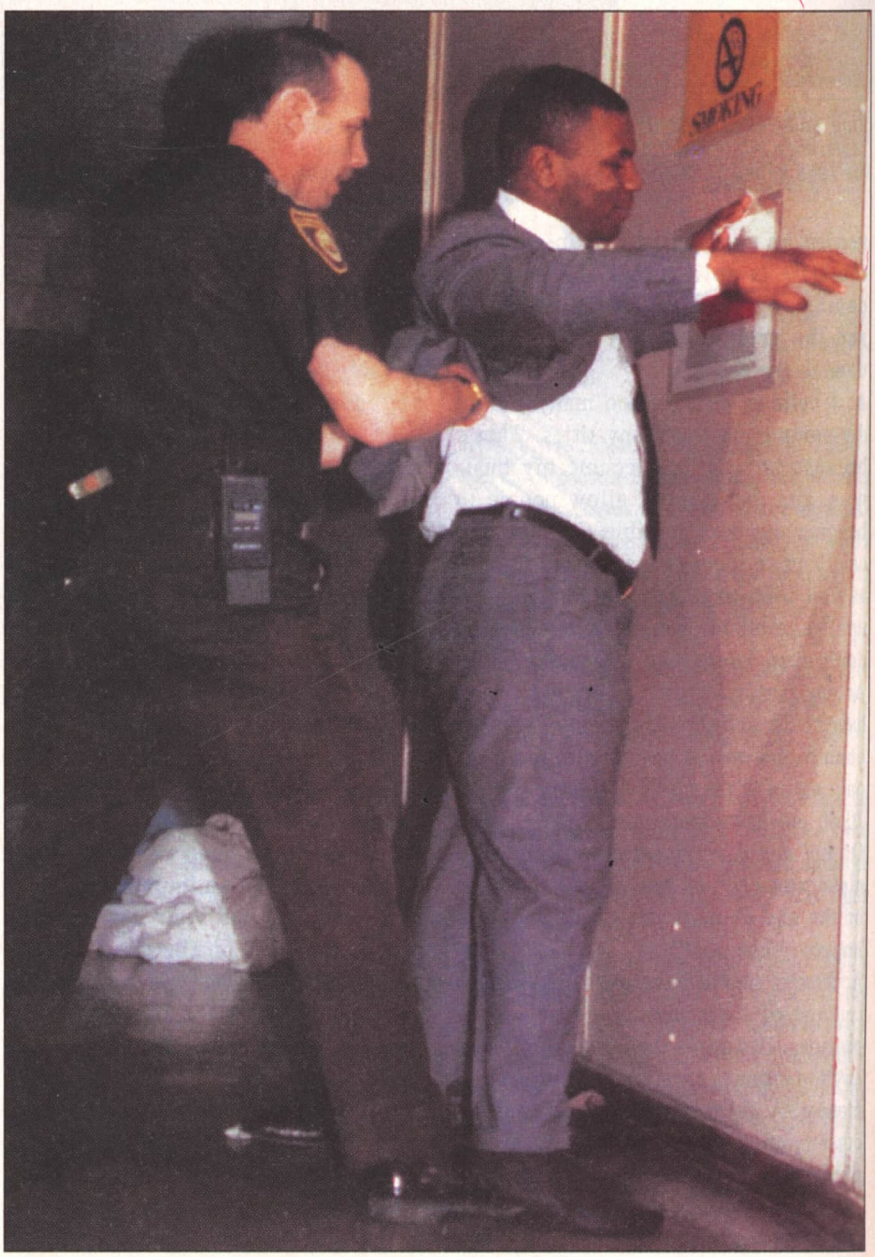
A: Kevin Rooney? *(long pause)* This is a difficult one. We used to have a lot of good times. It's sad it had to end the way it did. I was doing my thing. He was doing his thing. He got caught between something he shouldn't have been caught in between. He believed he had more power than he actually did. He believed he was in the situation to stay forever. But that wasn't necessarily true. I was only with him because of Cus. He doesn't understand that Bill Cayton and Jim Jacobs didn't want him to be my trainer. They wanted to get Eddie Futch to train me. But I was loyal to him because I knew that if Kevin didn't train me, what else was he gonna do? He wasn't that successful as a fighter.

Q: Steve Lott (an employee of Jacobs and Cayton, and one-time roommate of Tyson).

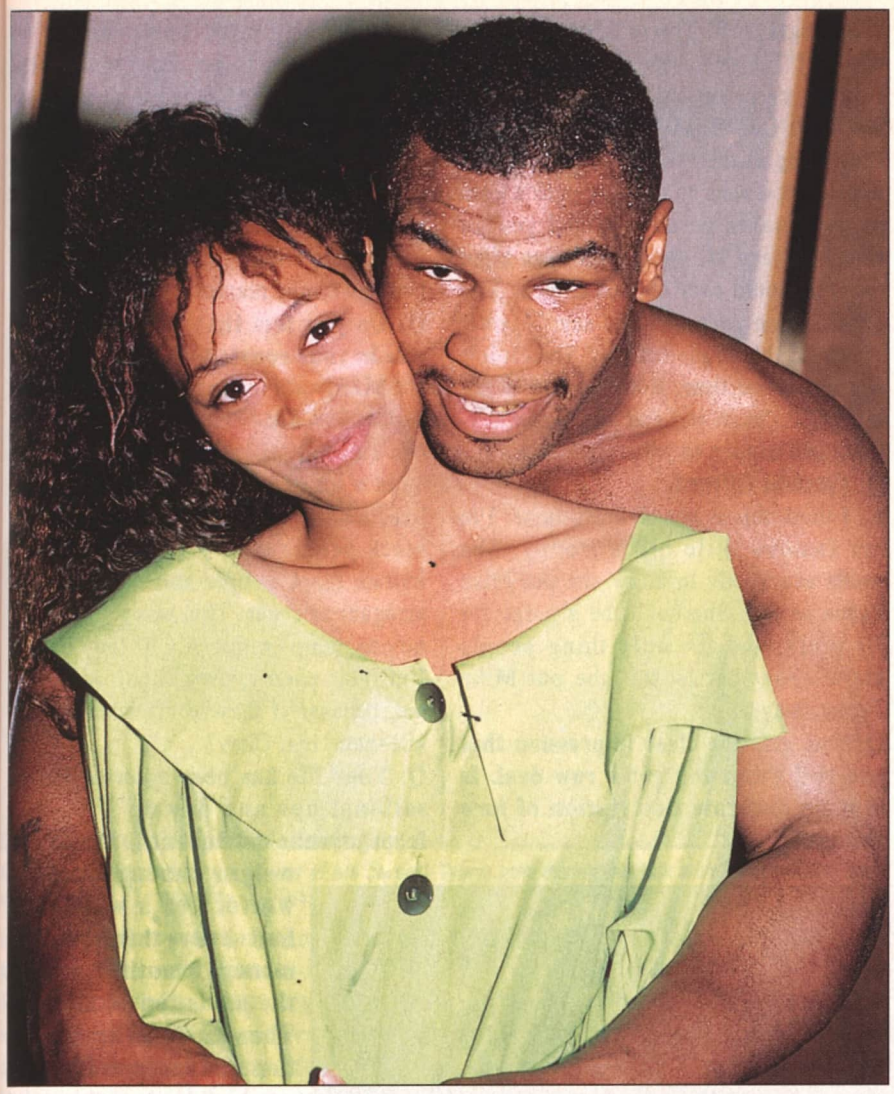
A: Very cordial. A very diplomatic kind of guy. Steve Lott is a good man. But Steve is a businessman. I like Steve a great deal. We all have our own little way about what we want in life. Steve attacks what he wants in life, and I respect him for that. But sometimes there are complications. I'm not saying there are now, and you never know what will happen when I get out. But I would hate to be on the bad side of him because I really like Steve. I really like him.

Q: Jose Torres.

A: An opportunist. For some reason he never liked me, though he pretended to be my friend for many years. I had a great deal of respect for him, and I couldn't believe he did the things he did. Then again, I always felt he envied me. It still



Up against the wall: Tyson is searched by a corrections officer prior to being booked on the rape charge that eventually sent him to prison for three years.



Beauty and the beast: Tyson hugs his former wife, actress Robin Givens. Tyson says that they were too young and not ready for marriage, and has no hard feelings toward her.

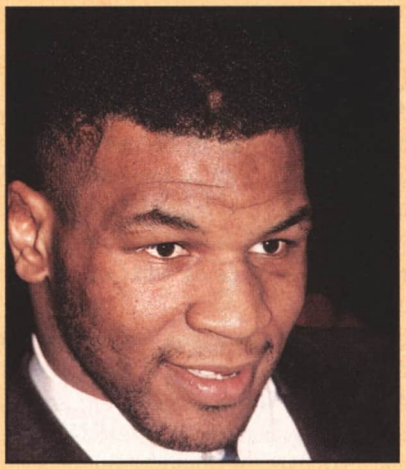
hurts today that he wrote a book about me that was nothing but lies. I still haven't said anything disrespectful about him, because I believe I'm better than that. But he hurt my feelings.

Q: HBO is making a movie about you based on Torres' book. Do you have any thoughts about that?

A: Well, the movie is a bunch of lies, and what Jose wrote is bunch of lies. He asked me one time, and I said yes, you can write a book about me. I was a young kid, 20, 21 years old. He discussed something about pain, and how I like to hurt women, which wasn't necessarily true. I said that when I was younger, I loved to inflict pain. He walked around with a tape recorder trying to discuss these things that were damaging. But I wasn't talking about women. When I was fighting, I wanted to hurt the guy, I wanted to break him up. And I got that from the old fighters because they used to say what they were gonna do to guys. And I'm living back in their time, and I'm not thinking about having some kind of fear for the media. I'm not thinking about becoming a corporation and making commercials. I don't give a damn about Pepsi-Cola. I think about Joe Gans and Battling Nelson. Those were the guys I really admired. If those guys told me, f___ Pepsi, I would say f___ Pepsi. That's what I was into back then. I wasn't thinking about how my life depends on some corporation sponsoring me. That's not where I'm at.

Q: So you're saying when you gave Torres permission to write a book about you, you were still kind of naive.

A: Very much so. I trusted these guys. I never knew the things he did. I never knew that at one time he went around saying that



"I don't care a damn about my life. That's why I'm so successful and everything, because I don't care."

Cus stole his money. These guys, Floyd Patterson and Torres, did things to Cus I never even knew existed. I understand that things happen, just like with me and Kevin. But Cus always talked about these guys highly and about what great fighters they were. Then, when I found out from writers and other people, I thought, *Holy Moses, Cus never said bad things about these guys.*

Q: Robin Givens.

A: We were two young people who weren't supposed to be married in the first place. We weren't ready for marriage, and we got caught up in the whole situation of being who we were. She got caught up in being who she was because she was with me. I don't have any hard feelings for Robin. We were two kids. Things happen. She did things I truly didn't like and don't agree with, but what can you say? When all is said and done, we're all dead anyway. I don't want to be her friend. I don't want to hug and kiss and be cordial with her, but I have nothing bad or good to say about her.

Q: Don King.

A: Don King is a good man. Don King is a businessman. Don King sometimes gets caught up in being so suspicious of everybody. I think that sometimes he even distrusts his friends. I think that

that's just the life he leads. I don't think he trusts me totally.

Q: Is he paranoid?

A: Paranoid! Anybody in the boxing business deserves to be paranoid. You have no other choice because being in boxing is like being in the mob. I'm your friend, and then tomorrow I'm your enemy. It depends on what you say and what you do.

Q: Gregory Garrison (special prosecutor).

A: Gregory Garrison is an opportunist. But I was in a situation where I couldn't win. It's like I'm fighting you and your whole family. Me and you are fighting in your backyard with your whole family—and they have shotguns. And you expect me to win? Give me a break.

Q: Vincent Fuller (lead defense attorney).

A: You know what I think? I think these guys really believed I raped this chick. I think I had to convince them that I was innocent. It was a disgusting display of legal tactics. I didn't know anything about legal stuff. The only thing I knew was that Don said these were good guys. I didn't know anything. I didn't know about F. Lee Bailey. We're blind to everything in this world until it happens to us. If you were to one day miss a light or your brakes go on you, and you hit somebody and kill them, you were blind that that could ever happen to you. You depended on your car. You say, "My car never did this to me before." Then it lets you down one time. But now you're not blind. You're in jail and you know anything can happen to you.

Q: Patricia Gifford.

A: I think this is her claim to fame. I'm her famous little black trophy. She wants everybody to know she put Mike Tyson in jail. She could be a judge for 20 years, and the only thing people know about her is that she put Mike Tyson away.

Q: One gets the clear impression that you still think you got a raw deal. Is that an accurate description of how you feel?

A: Absolutely, man. Everyone f___ed me. If you want to get down to the nitty-gritty, the judge f___ed me because she doesn't have anything better to do but put a little famous guy, who she knows was innocent, in jail. If I was guilty, she would have given me 60 years. If all 12 jurors felt I was guilty, I should have been given the maximum.

Q: Do you feel that racism played a role in your conviction?

A: Man, racism is just so prevalent worldwide. Me being who I am, being a black man, I said a lot of things that irritated a lot of people at one time in my life. I said things, white people this, black people that. I've said things to irritate black people and white people, arrogant as I was. This was the opportunity to dump on me. And if they believe I'm their enemy, they should dump on me, because if they're my enemy I will kill them, too. Okay?

Q: Your life has been a series of sensational ups and downs. You went from juvenile delinquent to the heavyweight champion of the world. For a while, you had everything—fame, money, beautiful women, the adulation of millions. Then came your conviction and incarceration. As you look back at this point in your life, what is your biggest regret?

A: I would have never fallen in love.

Q: You think falling in love is bad?

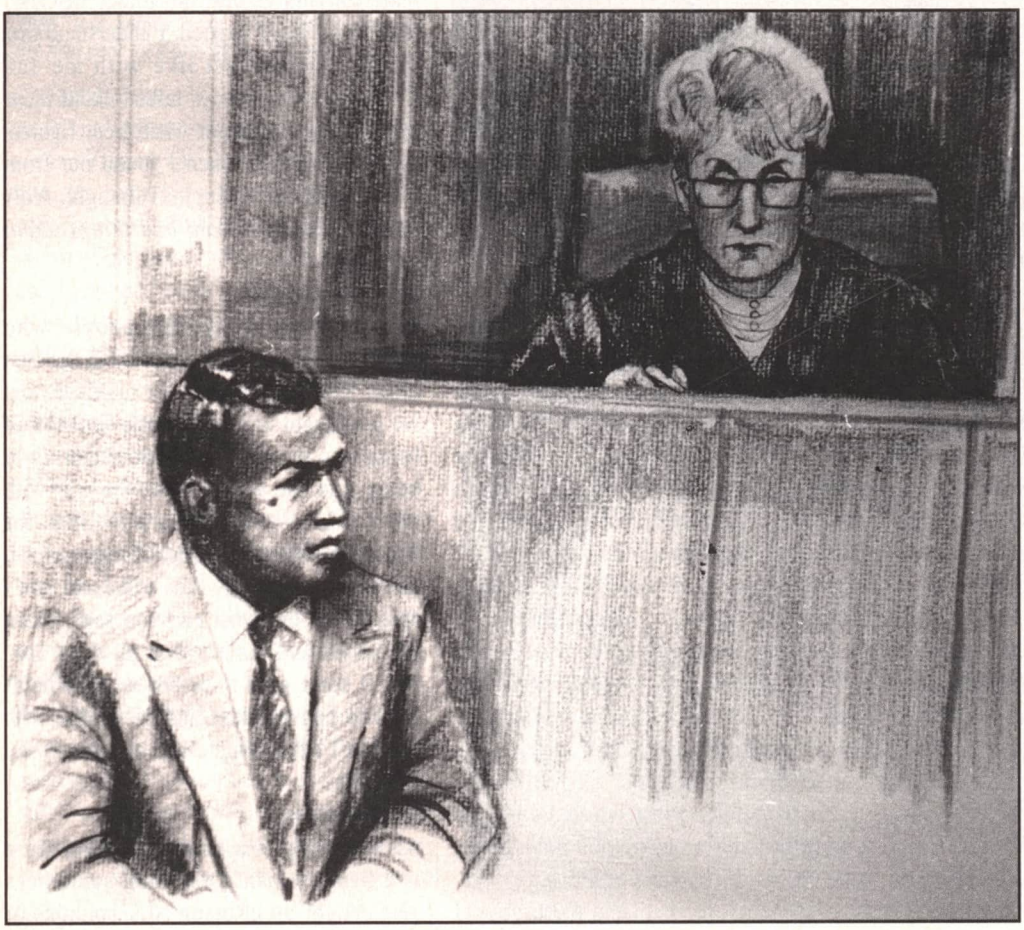
A: For me, it probably is. I've never been successful in relationships where you really have a deep infatuation for a person.

Q: Besides the obvious, what has been the hardest part of being incarcerated?

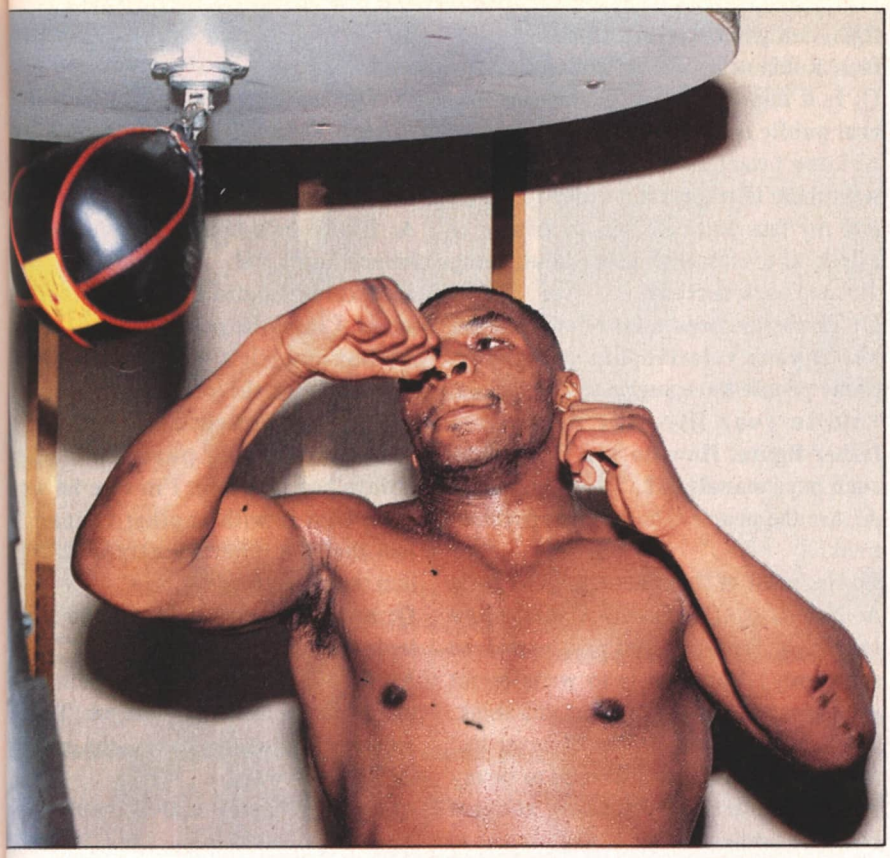
A: I don't know. It's so crazy, but I think I could do 100 years without flinching.

Q: Doesn't the boredom get to you?

A: I used to think it would. When I first came, I used to say, "It's killing me. It's



This artist's sketch of Tyson's rape trial in Indianapolis also shows a likeness of Judge Patricia J. Gifford. Tyson was not very flattering in his comments about her, saying she wanted to make a name for herself at his expense.



Superbly conditioned through most of his career, Tyson said during his talk with THE RING that he weighed about 214 pounds. He plans to begin boxing shortly after his release from prison.

illing me. I want see my family." But hen it really comes down to it, I really on't have anybody I want to go to. I've een alone all my life, and every time I id accept someone in my life, they've __ed me *(laughs)*. Who do I really ant to go to? I'll always take care of amille. Now, she's 90 years old. Come n, odds are not on her side. As long as he's all right and my little daughter is ll right, I don't give a damn about anyhing. Me? My life is useless. I don't are a damn about my life. That's why 'm so successful and everything, ecause I don't care.

): Despite your tough-guy image, ou're still a human being, experienc-ng the same emotions as the rest of s. Has there ever been a time since ou've been in prison when you've roke down and cried?

A: I'd never do that.

): Why's that? Don't you ever feel orry for yourself?

A: No, I can't do that. I just feel that veryone is against me. I try not to let nyself get angry, and if I cried, I'd get ngry at myself.

): You've been studying the Islamic religion. Has that been a comfort to you?

A: It's helped me a great deal. You know, if it wasn't for Islam, I don't know what I'd be into. I would become part of society in this place. I'd probably be in here with these damned faggots, getting high. Man, I'm telling you, it's a helluva world in here. It's a world within a world.

Q: How has Islam helped you?

A: It's given me a great outlook on life. I have to appreciate where I've been, where I haven't been. I could have been somewhere else worse. I could have been in Attica. I just praise the Lord that I'm not dead.

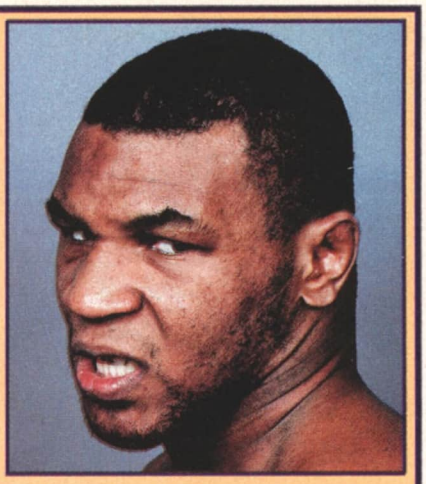
Q: What about your GED examination? When are you scheduled to take the retest?

A: I don't know. You know, I believed I passed the first time.

Q: Are you saying you think they rigged the result?

A: Come on, please. They'd let everyone in here go before they'd let me go. They would keep me in here alone.

Q: So you don't think you'll bother taking it again?



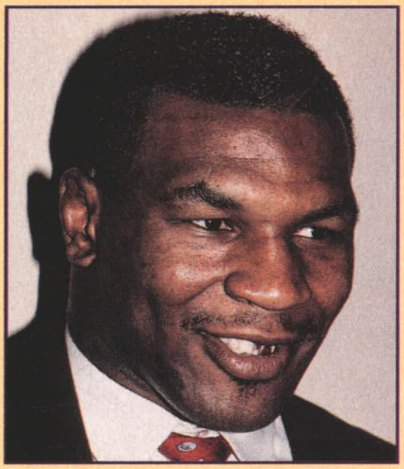
"Now, Mike Tyson hates the world. That's just a fact. I hate everybody. I know they say, 'No, you can't hate the world, don't be bitter.' But I just hate everybody."

A: I may take it. I'm not caught up in no damned GED. I read all these damned books and they drove me out of my mind. I must have read over 100 books. Friedrich Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Alexandre Dumas. It drove me nuts. I'm out of my mind now from reading all that s___. It was good stuff, but I never looked at things from that kind of perspective. Nietzsche told me there is no God, there's just superman. Man, I don't want to hear that crap. Tolstoy told me women ain't s___. Machiavelli told me don't trust nobody. I know that already! *(much laughter)* Don't tell me. I know this.

Q: You spent a lot of money on legal fees, unsuccessfully appealing your rape conviction. Do you wish you had kept the money in the bank?

A: I did the time anyway, right? I'm not tripping on the money. I don't give a damn about money. I just wish I could have given it to someone who could have used it.

Q: There's been a lot of speculation concerning your financial status. A lot



"I just want to relax for a second, just a split-second. Not a month. I just want to relax a second and think."

of people think you're broke. Is that true?

A: I'm not broke. I'm not Mike Tyson rich, but I can do what I want. I can still buy things I want in prison. I can still send money to someone in another country if I want them to come see me.

Q: Because you're Mike Tyson, you have the potential to make millions of dollars as soon as you get out of jail and start fighting again. Other inmates won't have an opportunity to make a lot of money. So aren't you really in a different situation from most of the guys in here?

A: Well, if I was that guy and I'd gotten this case, I would have gotten 60 years and nobody would have given a f___. The world we live in, man, it's incredible. But it's the only world we have.

Q: Overall, how would you describe the way the media has treated you throughout your career?

A: They took some good shots at me. They got me pretty good. But I'm not an animal. I'm a human being. You, for one, said that. I love my family. I love my daughter. I'm not a child molester. I don't molest my daughter. I don't beat on women. A women may say I beat her, but have you ever seen Robin's face caved in? I hit Mitch Green in a street-fight, and you saw what happened to his face. Robin never had no bruises.

Q: Is it important to you how the general public feels about you?

A: I don't want anyone to love me. I just want them to respect me. Nobody comes into my face and calls me an asshole or a jerk and violates me without being violated back in return.

Q: There has been a lot of speculation about your relationship with King. Some people have suggested he filled a void in your life—the need for a father-figure. How do you respond to such psychoanalysis?

A: Are the people who say that psychiatrists?

Q: No, most of them are sportswriters.

A: No, most of 'em are assholes *(more laughter)*. How can you psychoanalyze somebody? Your job is to write about what you see, not write what you think. They should lose their jobs. I never had a father. So how's he supposed to be my father? What would I know about a father-son relationship?

Q: Because you never had that kind of relationship, you were looking for it.

A: That's not true at all. Okay?

Q: Will King be your promoter after you return to the ring? And will his recent indictment for insurance fraud influence your decision?

A: Nothing is going to influence any decisions that I make, regardless. If I choose him to be my promoter, he's gonna be my promoter. I like Don.

Q: When you're released from prison, will you jump right back into boxing or take some time to relax and hang out?

A: Hey, I've relaxed for three years. I don't need any more relaxing.

Q: There has also been a lot of conjecture about who will train you. Can you give us any insight as to who will get the job?

A: I hate everybody, man. I don't know.

Q: You hate all trainers?

A: I hate everybody because he'll train me today and train another guy to fight me tomorrow. This is a joke. There's no loyalty in this business. This is like the mob, like the highest paid gun. Who gives a f___ about Mike Tyson? Give me a break, all right. Who actually cares about my well-being? The people who do are probably not capable of training me.

Q: Do you have any comments about the job Teddy Atlas, one of your amateur trainers, did in helping Michael Moorer win the heavyweight title?

A: Did he help him? Do you believe he helped him a lot?

Q: I think he did in the motivational sense. I think he pushed him.

A: But how? It's very difficult to say that because the only way you could actually help somebody win is if you're in there throwing punches. The guy always had it in him. I'm sure he would have won it with another trainer. It's just that the other trainers didn't give him the proper insight.

Q: But if you give a fighter the proper insight, isn't that helping him?

A: To a certain extent, but trainers get more credit than they deserve. Trainers are glorified cheerleaders, the majority of them, anyway.

Q: Are there any active trainers you respect?

A: I don't disrespect anyone. They just get more credit and more money than they deserve.

Q: Moorer could very well be one of your future opponents. What is your opinion of him as a fighter?

A: I don't know. I've only seen him fight once or twice. And if I'm in my best shape and he's in his best shape and we fight, he couldn't win.

Q: Former champion Riddick Bowe and WBC champion Lennox Lewis are soon scheduled to fight each other. Who do you like in that fight?

A: I don't know. I used to like Bowe, but not with the extra weight.

Q: What about Lewis? Have you seen him fight?

A: Yeah, I've seen him fight a couple of times. He looks pretty good. I don't know what the competition is like out there. Sometimes we can think we are better than what we really are. I might get out there and be disaster. I don't think I will, but I might.

Q: Do you have a timetable for your comeback? Will you be ready for a title fight right away or will you want a few tune-ups?

A: I just want to relax for a second, just a split-second. Not a month. I just want

The highlight of Tyson's reign as heavyweight champion was his first-round annihilation of Michael Spinks (left). His last effort was a draining 12-round points win over Razor Ruddock in June 1991 (right). He's not yet 30, and there's presumably lots more fight left in him.

to relax for a second and think. I'm in here, and it's a totally different atmosphere in here than it is outside. And I just don't know what to expect yet. I've got to get my life together.

Q: What, besides the passing of time, is the biggest difference between the Mike Tyson who was imprisoned almost three years ago and Mike Tyson today?

A: The Mike Tyson who was not in prison and was out on the street being champion loved everybody, thought everybody was nice. Now, Mike Tyson hates the world. That's just a fact. I hate everybody. I know they say, "No, you can't hate the world, don't be bitter." But I just hate everybody. Well, the majority, maybe 99 percent.

Q: Do you feel that you owe boxing fans anything?

A: I'm gonna owe them until the day I die. You always owe those guys. But they don't like you, anyway.

Q: It's kind of strange you would say that, because while the establishment put you in prison, there's been a lot of support from the fans. Most of them never turned their backs on you. Doesn't that make you feel good?

A: They do that more because they feel sorry for somebody's circumstances. I don't want anyone feeling sorry for me. I know who I am and what I am. This doesn't trip me out. I understand that people are interested in me for what I do. And they shouldn't expect anything else out of me.

TYSON UPDATE

Enough has happened to Tyson since his release from the Indiana Youth Center in March 1995 to fill several books. Things looked rosy for a while, especially when he regained the WBC and WBA belts by knocking out Frank Bruno and Bruce Seldon in his third and fourth comeback bouts. But when Tyson defended against Evander Holyfield in November '96, both his career and life began to unravel again. Holyfield handed him a beating and took the titles via 11th-round TKO. But that one-sided defeat was nothing compared to the wrath that descended upon Tyson when he was disqualified for biting off a piece of Holyfield's ear in the June '97 rematch. Fined $3-million and banned from boxing for a year, Tyson didn't fight again until January '99, when he knocked out Frans Botha. Shortly after the Botha fight, Tyson was back in jail, convicted of assaulting two motorists in a road rage incident. After serving 3½ months, Tyson was released, but the turmoil continued. He became persona non grata in Las Vegas following a no-contest with Orlin Norris in October '99, and was forced to have three of his next four fights in Europe. A title bout with Lennox Lewis was almost cancelled when Tyson instigated a brawl at a press conference, but eventually took place in Memphis, Tennessee, in June '02. Lewis dominated the bout, knocking out Tyson in the eighth round of a fight that set a new all-time revenue record. For the latest news on Iron Mike, see the exclusive, never before published interview on page 8.

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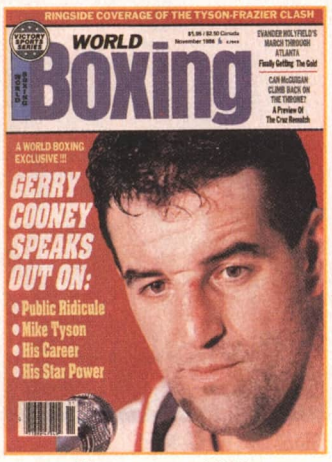

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...JUL/81	☐ OCT/85	☐ DEC/87	☐ JUN/93	☐ SPR/98
...SEP/81	☐ NOV/85	☐ JUN/89	☐ AUG/93	☐ SUM/98
...SEP/82	☐ DEC/85	☐ AUG/89	☐ DEC/93	☐ FAL/98
...JAN/83	☐ JAN/86	☐ OCT/89	☐ FEB/94	☐ WIN/98
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...JUL/84	☐ DEC/86	☐ JUN/91	☐ AUG/95	☐ JUL/01
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A GENERATION OF CLASSIC INTERVIEWS

The following is a complete listing of question and answer interviews that have appeared in *The Ring* and *KO* since 1980. The interviews in **bold type** are still available by mail order (see pages 14-15 and 24-25 for details).

Greg Page	June 1980	KO
Muhammad Ali	August 1980	KO
James Scott	October 1980	KO
Thomas Hearns	October 1980	Ring
M. Saad Muhammad	Dec. 1980	KO
Larry Holmes	January 1981	Ring
Aaron Pryor	February 1981	KO
E. Mustafa Muhammad	Feb. 1981	Ring
E. Mustafa Muhammad	April 1981	KO
Michael Spinks	June 1981	KO
Mike Trainer	June 1981	Ring
Mike Weaver	August 1981	KO
Roberto Duran	August 1981	Ring
Larry Holmes	December 1981	KO
Thomas Hearns	January 1982	Ring
Sugar Ray Leonard	February 1982	KO
Marvin Hagler	April 1982	KO
Dwight Braxton	June 1982	KO
Ray Mancini	July 1982	KO
Michael Dokes	August 1982	KO
Saoul Mamby	September 1982	KO
Randy Cobb	October 1982	KO
Thomas Hearns	November 1982	KO
Alexis Arguello	December 1982	KO
Jeff Chandler	January 1983	KO
Gerrie Coetzee	February 1983	KO
Hilmer Kenty	March 1983	KO
Renaldo Snipes	April 1983	KO
Tex Cobb	**April 1983**	**Ring**
Hector Camacho	May 1983	KO
Pinklon Thomas	**June 1983**	**KO**
Bobby Chacon	July 1983	KO
M. Jones/D. Rappaport	**August 1983**	**KO**
Sean O' Grady	September 1983	KO
Sugar Ray Leonard	**September 1983**	**Ring**
Marvis Frazier	**October 1983**	**KO**
Howard Davis Jr.	November 1983	KO
Juan LaPorte	December 1983	KO
Greg Page	December 1983	Ring
Ray Mancini	January 1984	KO
Roger Mayweather	February 1984	KO
Davey Moore	March 1984	KO
Rocky Lockridge	April 1984	KO
Mike Rossman	May 1984	KO
Larry Holmes	June 1984	KO
Donald Curry	**July 1984**	**KO**
Sugar Ray Leonard	**August 1984**	**KO**
Emanuel Steward	September 1984	KO
Aaron Pryor	**October 1984**	**KO**
Livingstone Bramble	**November 1984**	**KO**
Gene Hatcher	December 1984	KO
Tyrone Crawley	**January 1985**	**KO**
Ray Mancini	**February 1985**	**KO**
Thomas Hearns	**March 1985**	**KO**
Bill Costello	April 1985	KO
Greg Page	**July 1985**	**KO**
Bobby Czyz	**August 1985**	**KO**
Jake LaMotta	**August 1985**	**Ring**
Mark Breland	**October 1985**	**KO**
Pinklon Thomas	**December 1985**	**KO**
Alexis Aguello	**January 1986**	**KO**
Michael Spinks	March 1986	KO
Mike Tyson	May 1986	KO
Donald Curry	June 1986	KO
Livingstone Bramble	September 1986	KO
Sugar Ray Leonard	**October 1986**	**KO**
Hector Camacho	November 1986	KO
Larry Holmes	**December 1986**	**KO**
Vinny Pazienza	January 1987	KO
Bobby Czyz	**February 1987**	**KO**
Michael Olajide	March 1987	Ring
Ray Mancini	April 1987	KO
Michael Olajide	July 1987	KO
Evander Holyfield	**August 1987**	**KO**
Lloyd Honeyghan	September 1987	KO
Tyrell Biggs	**October 1987**	**KO**
Frankie Duarte	**November 1987**	**KO**
Barry McGuigan	**December 1987**	**KO**
Aaron Pryor	**January 1988**	**KO**
Bob Arum	**February 1988**	**KO**
Marvin Hagler	**March 1988**	**KO**
Michael Spinks	April 1988	KO
Thomas Hearns	**May 1988**	**KO**
Dr. Ferdie Pacheco	**July 1988**	**KO**
Matthew Hilton	**August 1988**	**KO**
Marlon Starling	**September 1988**	**KO**
Frank Bruno	**October 1988**	**KO**
Iran Barkley	November 1988	KO
Kevin Rooney	**December 1988**	**KO**
Gil Clancy	**January 1989**	**KO**
Bill Cayton	**February 1989**	**KO**
Floyd Patterson	**April 1989**	**KO**
Michael Nunn	October 1989	KO
Mike Trainer	November 1989	KO
Larry Merchant	December 1989	KO
Razor Ruddock	January 1990	KO
Riddick Bowe	**February 1990**	**KO**
Seth Abraham	March 1990	KO
Jose Sulaiman	**April 1990**	**KO**
Pernell Whitaker	May 1990	KO
Michael Moorer	**June 1990**	**KO**
Buster Douglas	**June 1990**	**Ring**
Sugar Ray Leonard	**July 1990**	**KO**
Teddy Atlas	**August 1990**	**KO**
Buster Douglas	**September 1990**	**KO**
Tony Lopez	**October 1990**	**KO**
Don Dunphy	**November 1990**	**KO**
Virgil Hill	**December 1990**	**KO**
Irving Rudd	**January 1991**	**KO**
Ray Mercer	**February 1991**	**KO**
Tommy Morrison	April 1991	KO
Jeff Fenech	**May 1991**	**KO**
Evander Holyfield	**June 1991**	**KO**
Buddy McGirt	**July 1991**	**KO**
Michael Carbajal	**August 1991**	**KO**
Eddie Futch	**September 1991**	**KO**
Mike McCallum	**October 1991**	**KO**
Troy Dorsey	**November 1991**	**KO**
Terry Norris	February 1992	KO
Mike Tyson	**March 1992**	**KO**
Hector Camacho	**May 1992**	**KO**
Shelly Finkel	**June 1992**	**KO**
Julian Jackson	**July 1992**	**KO**
Michael Spinks	**August 1992**	**KO**
Ken Norton	**September 1992**	**KO**
Bobby Czyz	**October 1992**	**KO**
Joey Gamache	**November 1992**	**KO**
Lennox Lewis	**December 1992**	**KO**
Vinny Pazienza	**January 1993**	**KO**
George Benton	**February 1993**	**KO**
Emanuel Steward	**March 1993**	**KO**
Junior Jones	**May 1993**	**KO**
Jackie Kallen	June 1993	KO
Roy Jones	July 1993	KO
Julio Cesar Chavez	August 1993	Ring
Al Cole	September 1993	KO
Al Certo	November 1993	KO
Kennedy McKinney	January 1994	KO
Simon Brown	May 1994	KO
Rafael Ruelas	July 1994	KO
Oscar De La Hoya	September 1994	KO
Michael Moorer	November 1994	KO
Michael Carbajal	December 1994	KO
James Toney	Winter 1994	KO
Mike Tyson	Winter 1994	Ring
Vinny Pazienza	January 1995	KO
Frankie Randall	February 1995	KO
Larry Holmes	March 1995	KO
Johnny Tapia	May 1995	KO
Oliver McCall	**June 1995**	**KO**
George Foreman	**June 1995**	**Ring**
Emanuel Steward	July 1995	KO
Roy Jones	August 1995	KO
Mike Tyson	Vol. II, No. 1	Ring Extra
Nigel Benn	September 1995	KO
J. Horne/R. Holloway	October 1995	KO
Oscar De La Hoya	November 1995	KO
T. Thornton/S. Smoger/R. Peltz/P. Steinberg	December 1995	KO
Danny Romero	Winter 1995	KO
Buster Mathis Jr.	**Winter 1995**	**Ring**
Bruce Seldon	January 1996	KO
James Toney	February 1996	KO
Jose Sulaiman	March 1996	KO
Mike Tyson	March 1996	Ring
Jack Newfield	March 1996	Ring
Terry Norris	May 1996	KO
Cedric Kushner	**June 1996**	**KO**
Christy Martin	July 1996	KO
Jay Bright	August 1996	KO
Butterbean	**September 1996**	**KO**
Arturo Gatti	October 1996	KO
Bob Arum	**November 1996**	**KO**
Rock Newman	**December 1996**	**KO**
Bernard Hopkins	**Winter 1996**	**KO**
Lou Duva	**January 1997**	**KO**
Naseem Hamed	February 1997	KO
Ray Leonard	**March 1997**	**KO**
L. DiBella/J. Larkin	May 1997	KO
Kostya Tszyu	June 1997	KO
Buster Douglas	July 1997	KO
Hector Camacho	**August 1997**	**KO**
David Tua	September 1997	KO
Montell Griffin	October 1997	KO
Jim Lampley	November 1997	KO
Frans Botha	**December 1997**	**KO**
Mills Lane	**Holiday 1997**	**KO**
Mark Johnson	**January 1998**	**KO**
Marc Ratner	**February 1998**	**KO**
Lennox Lewis	**March 1998**	**KO**
Evander Holyfield	**April 1998**	**Ring**
Eddie Futch	**June 1998**	**KO**
Shane Mosley	**August 1998**	**KO**
Brad Jacobs	**September 1998**	**KO**
Roy Jones	October 1998	KO
Tim Austin	**November 1998**	**KO**
Michael Grant	**December 1998**	**KO**
Oscar De La Hoya	December 1998	Ring
Larry Hazzard	Holiday 1998	KO
William Joppy	**January 1999**	**KO**
Angel Manfredy	**February 1999**	**KO**
Joe Frazier	**March 1999**	**KO**
Fernando Vargas	**May 1999**	**KO**
Floyd Mayweather	**June 1999**	**KO**
Tommy Brooks	**July 1999**	**KO**
David Reid	**August 1999**	**KO**
Emanuel Steward	**August 1999**	**Ring**
J Russell Peltz	**September 1999**	**KO**
Jake LaMotta	**October 1999**	**KO**
Arturo Gatti	**November 1999**	**KO**
Ike Ibeabuchi	**December 1999**	**KO**
Paulie Ayala	**Holiday 1999**	**KO**
Tony Ayala Jr.	**January 2000**	**KO**
Bob Arum	**February 2000**	**KO**
James Page	**March 2000**	**KO**
Dan Goossen	**May 2000**	**KO**
Sharmba Mitchell	**June 2000**	**KO**
Shane Mosley	**July 2000**	**KO**
Miguel Diaz	**August 2000**	**KO**
Chris Byrd	**September 2000**	**KO**
Stevie Johnston	**October 2000**	**KO**
Jay Larkin	**November 2000**	**KO**
Frank Maloney	**December 2000**	**KO**
Evander Holyfield	**February 2001**	**KO**
Max Kellerman	**April 2001**	**KO**
Virgil Hill	**June 2001**	**KO**
Richard Steele	**August 2001**	**KO**
Hasim Rahman	**September 2001**	**Ring**
Lou DiBella	**October 2001**	**KO**
Laila Ali	**December 2001**	**KO**
Wladimir Klitschko	**February 2002**	**KO**
Duva Boxing	**April 2002**	**KO**
Jameel McCline	**June 2002**	**KO**
Kostya Tszyu	**August 2002**	**KO**
Fernando Vargas	**October 2002**	**KO**
Joe Calzaghe	**December 2002**	**KO**
Micky Ward	**Winter 2002**	**KO**
Klitschko Bros.	**March 2003**	**KO**
Buddy McGirt	**May 2003**	**KO**
Shane Mosley	**July 2003**	**KO**

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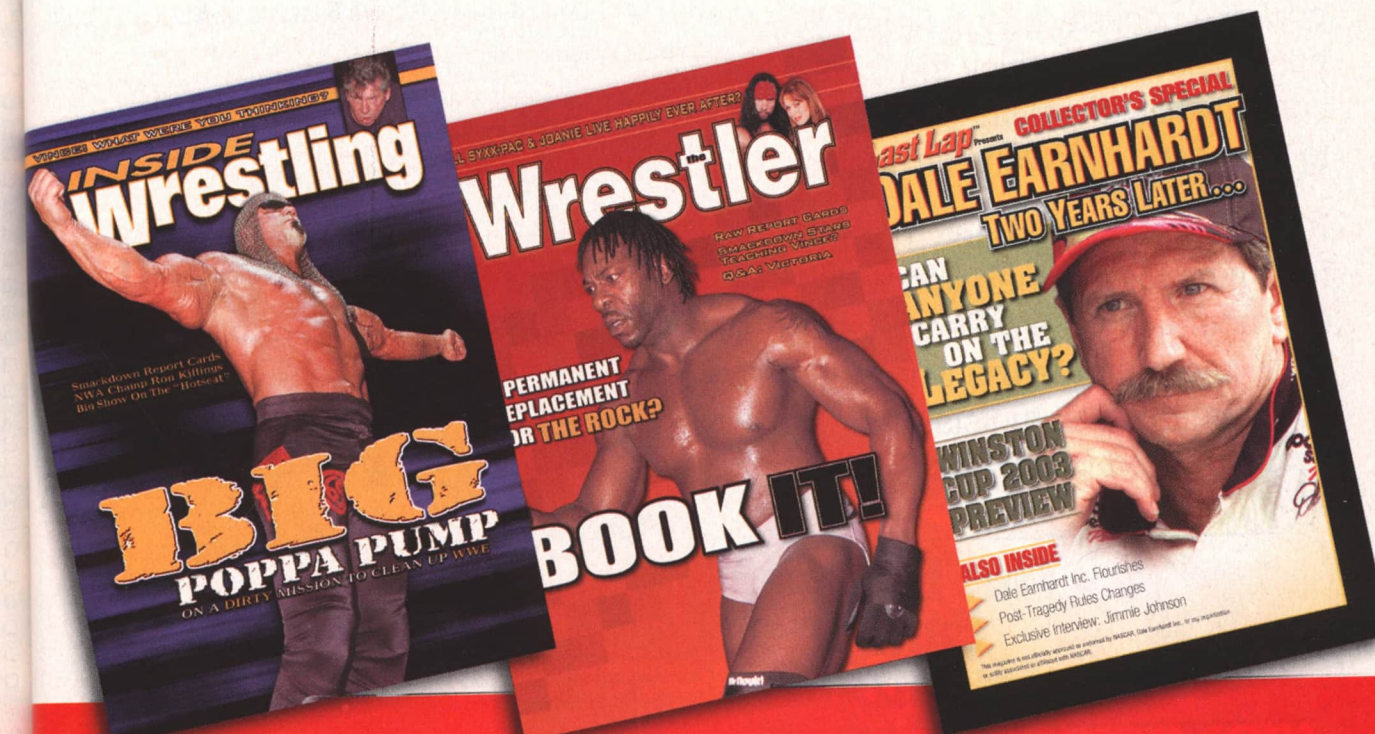

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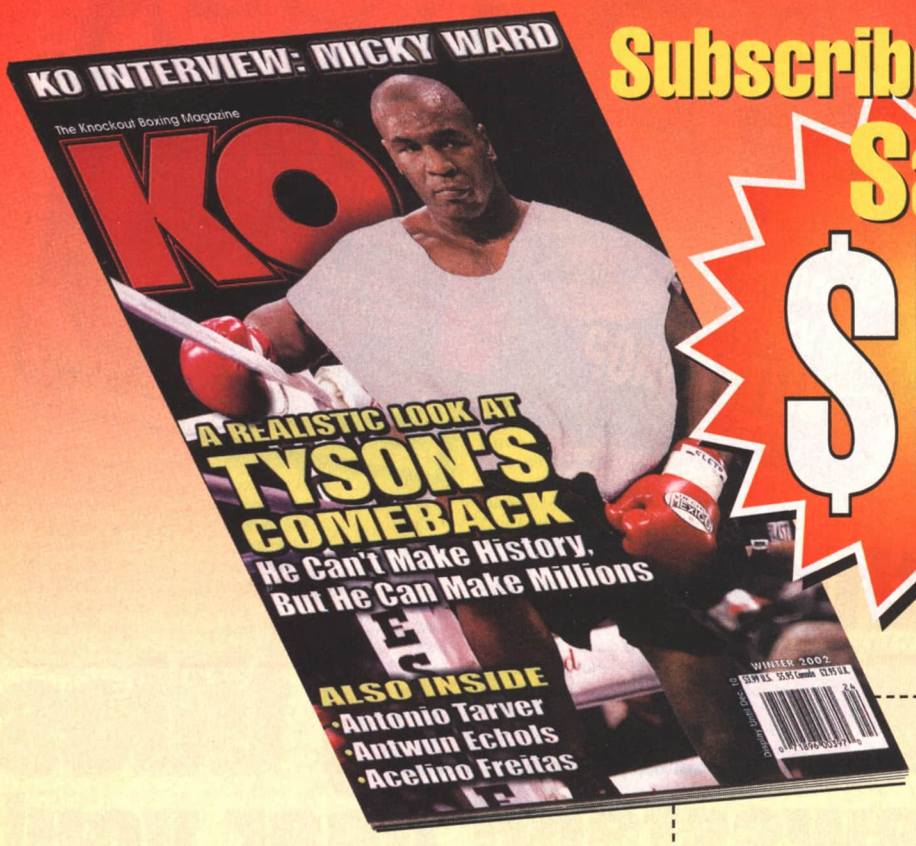

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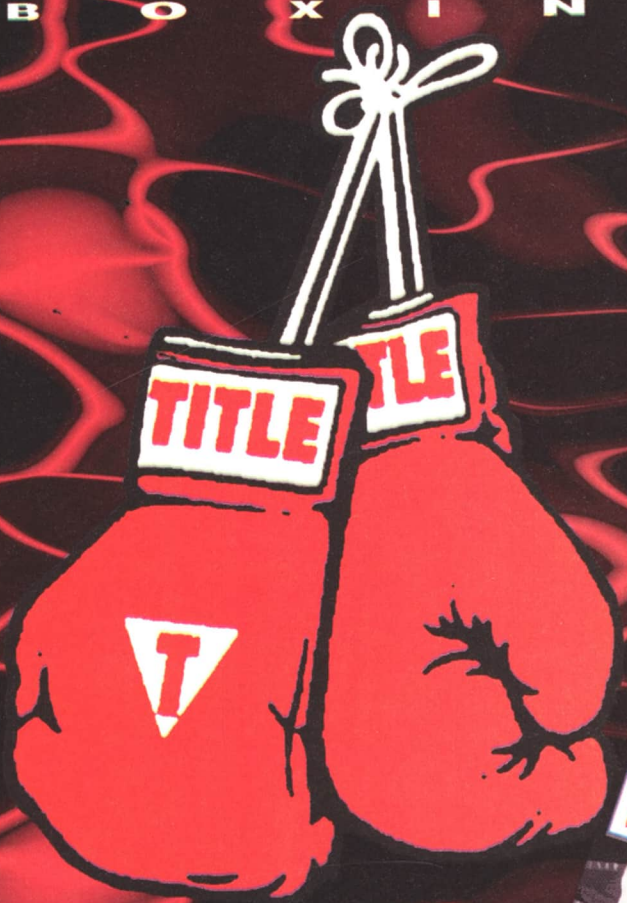

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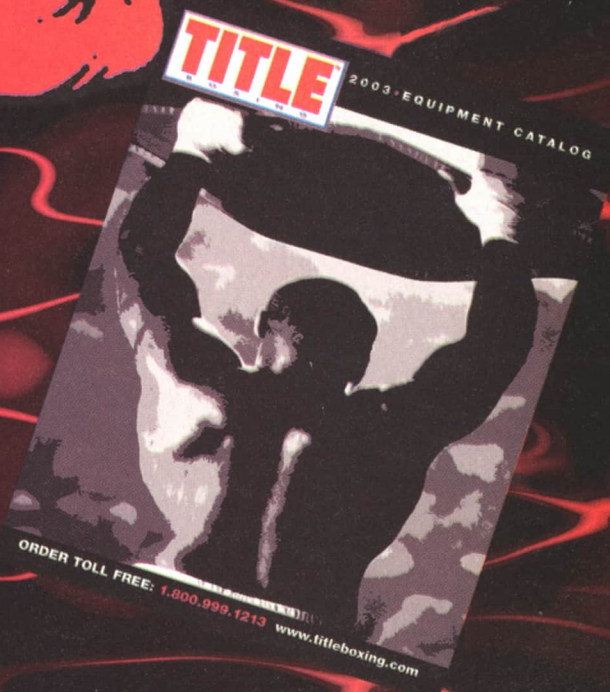

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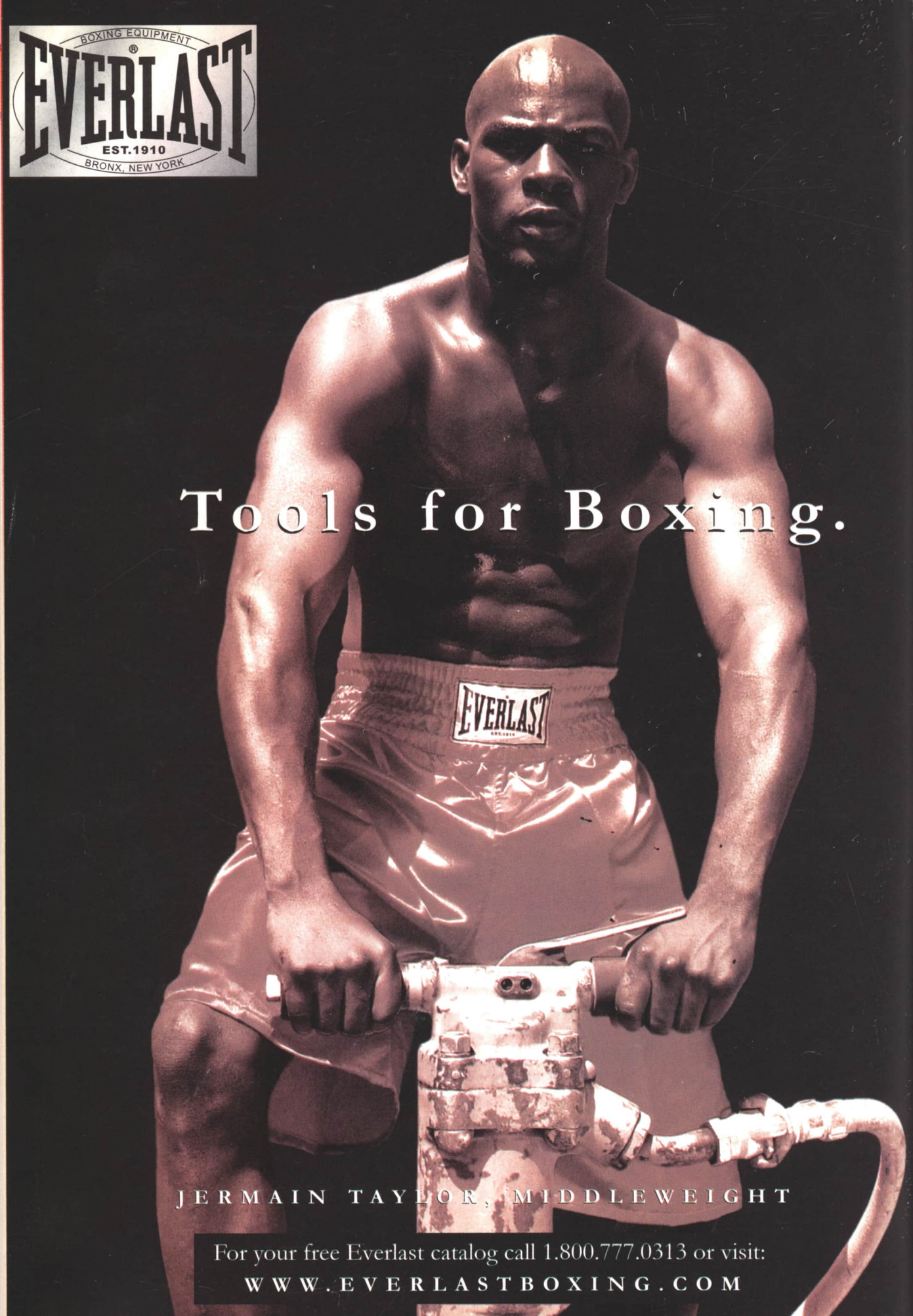
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